

Ancient Graffiti in Context

**Edited by J.A. Baird
and Claire Taylor**

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Ancient Graffiti in Context

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of ancient sources follow those in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition. Abbreviations of journals follow those in the *American Journal of Archaeology*. The following are also used:

AE	<i>L'Année Epigraphique: revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine</i> , Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae Editum</i> (1863–1974) Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
CEG	Hansen, P.A. (ed) (1983–1989) <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> , 2 vols., Berlin: de Gruyter.
CIG	Boeckh, A., Franz, J., Curtius, E. and Kirchhoff, A. (eds) (1828–1877) <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 4 vols. Berlin: Subsidia Epigraphica.
CLE	Buecheler, F. (1897–1926) <i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> . Leipzig: Teubner.
CTP	van der Poel, H. (1977–1986) <i>Corpus Topographicum Pompeianum</i> , 5 vols. Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante.
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (1903–) Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
IPriene	Hiller von Gaertringen, F. (ed) (1906) <i>Inschriften von Priene</i> , Berlin: Reimer.
LGPN	Fraser, P.M. and Matthews, E. (eds) (1987–) <i>Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</i> , 4 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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- MAMA *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae* (1928– [vols. 1–8]) Manchester.
- PPM *Pompei. Pitture e Mosaici* (1990–2003, 11 vols.)
Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana.
- SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (1923–)
Leiden: Brill.

Preface

Walk through any modern urban environment and you will see graffiti written on walls, bus shelters, pavements, post-boxes, etc. They are an inescapable part of the cityscape, sometimes visually arresting, other times easy to ignore; sometimes offensive, other times offensively banal. Graffiti appeared all over the ancient world as well, and this volume highlights their ubiquity and also their variability: from Rome to the Egyptian desert to the Syrian Euphrates, people were making their mark on the walls of houses and temples, in streets and marketplaces, in amphitheatres where crowds gathered and in remote spots where they did not, on walls of buildings, on columns of stoas, on objects.

Previous examinations of ancient graffiti have focused on individual sites or collections of objects and developed interpretations specific to these places or groups of material, but by viewing different examples side-by-side it is possible to view this practice within a wider context. Indeed, it is through contextualising this material that we see its value as evidence for the ancient world.

It was with this in mind that this volume started life at a workshop organised by the editors at the University of Leicester in November 2008, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The aim of this gathering was to compare different types of graffiti on a variety of surfaces from a range of sites across the ancient Mediterranean world and to explore the usefulness of modern parallels. We are grateful to all those who participated in this workshop, especially those who gave papers which are not included in this volume, for their comments, insight and enthusiasm about the project.

We would also like to thank Colin Adams, Penelope Allison, Roger Bagnall, Serafina Cuomo, Catharine Edwards, Lin Foxhall, Andy Merrills, Robin Osborne, John Ryan, Graham Shipley, Daniel Stewart and Jane Webster, as well the referees, for their assistance, advice and gracious answering of endless queries.

1 Ancient Graffiti in Context

Introduction

J.A. Baird and Claire Taylor

I'm amazed, O wall, that you have not fallen in ruins, you who support the tediousness of so many writers.

Pompeian graffito (*CIL* 4.1904)¹

Graffiti have long appealed to those interested in the ancient world. In early excavations of archaeological sites the words written on walls were instantly recognisable as being comparable to graffiti in the contemporary world—a way in which ancient society was brought to life. Writing which appeared on objects was thought to be equally connective to the past, illuminating aspects of life which were, again, rather familiar (for example, ownership marks on pots). Indeed, the practice of writing on walls goes back to some of the earliest visual forms known. In prehistoric cave paintings, such as the famed Palaeolithic images at Lascaux, marks on the walls were taken to represent the births of both art and *homo sapiens*, as evidence for communication, visual representation, and beauty in early human cultures (Smith 2004). This apparent familiarity has meant that modern graffiti has long been linked to its prehistoric antecedents (Brassai [1964] 2002: 139); Banksy and rock art have been understood as representing aspects of the same phenomenon, and modern graffiti sometimes explicitly references ancient precedents (Frederick 2009).

Ancient graffiti of the Greek and Roman worlds, too, has frequently been compared with modern examples: it has been assumed that such marks on modern and ancient walls alike, in their informality and immediacy, have something in common. Popular conceptions of the graffiti we see around us in the urban environment seep into interpretations of the markings of the past. Moreover, the attitudes of archaeologists and historians towards such writing are as deeply embedded in their own disciplines as they are in the popular consciousness: ancient examples are sometimes given as evidence of the 'less educated', the subversive, or the 'vulgar' in ancient societies without much interrogation of this idea (Cavallo 1983: 174–5; Wallace 2005: xxiv).

Historiographically, the Pompeian scholarship on graffiti has shaped how this evidence has been viewed within the disciplines of history and archaeology overall. The 1856 publication of *Graffiti of Pompeii* elicited

much excitement amongst scholars (Garrucci 1856), and the value of such evidence was realised early on; by 1868 it had already been remarked that '[b]esides the insight which the dipinti and graffiti of Pompeii give us into the social, political, and domestic life of a Roman provincial town of the first century, they are also valuable as specimens of ancient patois' (Evans 1868: 438–9). In Mau's study of 'life and art' in Pompeii, a chapter was devoted to graffiti, as 'the largest division of the Pompeian inscriptions', but these were presented with the disappointment that '[t]he people with whom we should most eagerly desire to come into direct contact, the cultivated men and women of the ancient city, were not accustomed to scratch their names upon stucco or to confide their reflections and experiences to the surface of a wall' (Mau 1899: 481–2). Reviewers of Tanzer's *The Common People of Pompeii* (1939), which was self-consciously styled as a study of the graffiti, were united in their view that the material 'links the life of today with that of Pompeii' (Gunmere 1940), 'bring[s] one close to ancient life' (Mattingly 1940), and provides 'a picture of daily life among everyday people' (Gardner Moore 1941). We can therefore see that familiar truisms about graffiti have appeared by the late-nineteenth century and are reinforced throughout the first half of the twentieth: they allow an unmediated contact with the writer, they were made by the lower classes, and they were a subcategory of ancient inscriptions.

Recent work however suggests that this was not the case. Indeed, the Pompeian material itself is not only rather heterogeneous, but also rather unusual in comparison with other cities where lots of graffiti are found; an observation which is thrown into relief in this volume by discussion of other sites within the ancient world. In Pompeii writing is found on walls in public spaces (Chiavria 2002), inside houses (Benefiel 2010), as well as in and around workspaces (bars, brothels etc; see McGinn 2002; Varone 2002: 143–54). Aside from the topographical variety, there is also a wide range of types of writing: from metrical and 'literary' graffiti (Cugusi 1985a, 2008; Kruschwitz 2008; Milnor 2009) to political 'posters' (Mouritsen 1988), adverts for sporting events (Funari and Garraffoni 2009) to simple personal names, greetings and 'erotic' texts (Varone 2002; Solin 2008), as well as a large corpus of pictorial examples (human figures, animals, ships as well as more abstract pictures are common: Funari 1993; Langner 2001).² Investigation of both linguistic and iconographical aspects of Pompeian graffiti in particular show that blanket assumptions that they were made by the 'lowest social stratum' are untenable not least because of the variety of material found (Solin 1973; Funari 1993; Hernández Pérez 2002–2003; Kruschwitz and Halla-aho 2007).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the study of ancient graffiti has been dominated by the city of Pompeii by virtue of the sheer number of surviving, recorded, examples found at the site. Pompeii features in a number of chapters in this volume too, for much the same reasons, but we hope that bringing together other case studies from across the Greek and Roman worlds will begin to

elucidate the diversity of the many graffiti practices as well as emphasising the importance of contextualisation (indeed the Pompeian examples are chosen because they highlight different ways in which graffiti might be both ‘read’ and used by scholars). For instance, this volume shows that many graffiti not only communicate a message to a reader, but also can be viewed as being part of a dialogue with one another. Graffiti may also mark time and space, and are one of the few forms of writing from the ancient world which preserve the material context of their production. Contextualising graffiti in this way highlights that, as a form of evidence, they have much to contribute to existing scholarly debates, for example those concerning literacy, orality, the relationship between text and image, the display of emotions, performance and the material construction of memory.

ANCIENT GRAFFITI? THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

The English word graffiti comes from the Italian verb *to scratch*, and in its simplest sense, graffiti are simply markings scratched onto a surface, whether of text or pictures. But graffiti themselves can be made by a number of means besides scratching: these include inscribing, using charcoal, ink, or paint (painted marks are usually termed *dipinti* and sometimes considered as a category of graffiti; see Kruschwitz 2010: 157, with n. 4).³ Apart from shining a light on the tools used, the way in which a mark is produced—whether with chisel, charcoal, paintbrush, or other implement—is not the singular means, nor necessarily the most useful criterion, with which to define this practice. Indeed, such an emphasis obscures not only other aspects of materiality but also more fruitful investigations into the spaces in which such markings inhabit, their location in relation to one another, as well as (ancient and modern) attitudes towards them.

If we were to take our lead from studies of contemporary graffiti, it might be easy to view ancient graffiti as an illicit urban phenomenon which defaces (other people’s) property (see for example Macdonald 2002).⁴ Much graffiti in the ancient world did occur within the ‘urban’ environment (see examples at Pompeii, Dura-Europos, Aphrodisias or Ephesos), but not exclusively so: graffiti also appear in other places (notably sanctuary sites: Delos, Aliko, El Kanais, Abydos), and in some cases, at sites which appear decidedly out-of-the-way (e.g. Hymettos in Attica).⁵ Although visibility is, in general terms, an important factor for both the production and reception of the marks, some graffiti appear in places where visibility is restricted (such as the possible children’s graffiti discussed here by Huntley, or the marks on a vessel perhaps destined for the grave examined by Volioti).

Modern definitions of graffiti routinely include adjectives such as ‘illicit’, ‘informal’, or ‘unauthorised’, but as is explored here, the notion of graffiti as being inherently subversive is very much a modern predilection. Zadorojnyi, for example, considers the complexities of graffiti as symbols of

political dissent within elite Greco-Roman literary discourse. Baird shows that a number of the graffiti in Dura can be associated with Roman military personnel, that is, the authorities of the city.

Similarly, viewing ancient graffiti as acts of defacement is as likely to mislead as to illuminate. Consider, for example, the marks on the columns of the quadriporticus in the market of Caesar and Augustus in Athens. Described in the scholarship as ‘vandalism’ (Hoff 2006: 182), these include merchants’ permanent stalls (sometimes called ‘*topoi* inscriptions’), as well as what seems to be a magical spell.⁶ But the appearance of merchants’ signs in a marketplace is a far from illegitimate act and the marking of a supposedly secret religious ritual in a high profile public place is less an act of vandalism of property than it is a deliberate and conspicuous threat to the persons targeted by the magic; it is simply unlikely the ancient users of the marketplace would have agreed with this classification.

A similar example can be noted in Aphrodisias (and discussed here by Chaniotis, page 202): acclamations praising benefactors, the emperor, and the senate written on the columns of porticos in the South Agora do not imply the wanton destruction of public buildings, but rather the acceptance of authority. Interpreting ancient writing like this as defacement, therefore, perhaps reveals more about modern expectations about where writing should (or should not) be found than it does about the ancient world. Here we can see clearly the limitations of using modern analogies to explain graffiti practices because they implicitly demonise the activity. Graffiti which appears on/in houses is a case in point; writing on interior walls in particular does not appear to be unusual or undesirable in the ancient world (as is demonstrated by Benefiel, Baird and Huntley in this volume), but it is socially unacceptable for modern audiences (Fleming 2001: 30). Although this is further complicated by other types of texts which appear on the interior walls of houses, such as those which form part of decorative schemes (Bergmann 2007), the variety of writing and its frequency of its appearance in the ancient world suggests that we need to reassess our notions of the social significance of this activity which move away from modern expectations about the ‘proper’ place for writing. (Further examples of writing inside houses can be seen at Delos: Severyns 1927; Zeugma: Barbet 2005; Ephesos: Tauber 2005; or Trimithis in Egypt: Cribiore et al. 2008). The same could be said of writing which appears in other spaces.

Graffiti have been implicitly defined by scholars of the Greek and Roman world as texts or images which appear in unexpected places, where they do not obviously belong (for further discussion see Chaniotis, pages 193–6, Baird, pages 65–6). So, a trademark scratched onto a pot after firing is not part of the original decoration and therefore termed ‘graffiti’ (Johnston 1979: 5),⁷ an abecedarium written on an ostrakon transforms a pottery fragment into a dedication, and a text describing sexual conquests on a wall in Pompeii gives a flavour of erotic life in the ancient world. However, this definition can only take us so far, and we must question whether these marks

are in fact unexpected and why *we* consider them so. Seen within the context of mercantile activity, trademarks give essential information about the contents of the vessel or the supplier; it is therefore crucial for the merchant and clearly expected within this sphere of activity. Likewise, the dedication of pieces of writing in sanctuaries is not a marginal activity and is hardly, therefore, unexpected (see, for example, the archaic sanctuaries of Apollo Daphnephoros in Eretria: Kenzelmann Pfyffer et al. 2005, or Zeus Hymettos in Attica: Langdon 1976). Indeed, our epigraphic knowledge would be severely reduced if we did not have such dedications. Writing sexual texts and depicting erotic scenes are of course entirely appropriate activity *within* a brothel, and this is where graffiti of this type are commonly found (see, for example, the ‘lupanare’ at Pompeii [VII.12.18–20]: PPM 7.520–39).

Ancient graffiti, then, are not necessarily defined only by their content or subject, nor by the surface onto which they are made, nor by the techniques with which they are produced. As with so many categories of evidence used by scholars, graffiti as a discrete class is largely a modern invention and in some contexts almost can be seen as ‘the Other’ against which the formality of parchments, papyri and lapidary inscriptions are held up. This is reflected in the ways in which scholars have historically dealt with this material, and the papers of Baird, Mairs and Taylor in this volume deal with this question further. Zadorojnyi, on the other hand, discusses some of the ambiguities of ‘graffiti’ which appear within the ancient literary tradition and demonstrates that the Greco-Roman literary elite (in a similar vein, but for different reasons) sometimes viewed spontaneous writing as ‘the Other’.

The choice to treat graffiti as a distinct category does not, it must be stressed, arise from ancient categories, but ironically there are now perhaps cogent reasons for doing so. The perceived ephemeral, informal and unsophisticated character of graffiti has meant that they have not received sufficient attention relative to other parts of the epigraphic corpus, yet they are abundant, appear in many different geographical and chronological contexts, and can contribute to a number of important debates. And while some graffiti from certain sites throughout the ancient world have, in fact, been relatively well-published, they have rarely been integrated into either archaeological or historical accounts in sophisticated, or easily accessible, ways.

Definitions and terminology may seem trivial, but they get to the root of some of the key problems which affect the study of ancient graffiti. The classification of extant graffiti within the epigraphic corpora has also informed their subsequent use by scholars: as noted by Kruschwitz (2005), the Pompeian graffiti of *CIL* appear in a separate volume because they are examples of cursive writing on a variety of materials (walls, wax tablets, pottery: see table 9.1, page 167). The corpus is arranged according to whether the marks were painted or scratched before being organised topographically, which makes it difficult to get a sense of how differently

produced marks are related to one another spatially (for further discussion of the historic problems relating to the organisation of *CIL* see Franklin 1991: 78–9). Furthermore, the lapidary inscriptions from the site are collected in a different volume which encourages further separation of this material from other forms of publically-visible writing.

There are similar problems with graffiti from the Greek world. *IG I³* (fifth-century Athenian inscriptions) makes implicit assumptions about authorship by classifying rupestrial graffiti (much, though not all, of it sexual) as *pueri* (*IG I³* 1399–1406), even though similar writing appears on pottery in symposium contexts and are therefore produced and read under very different circumstances, and such insults are common in Aristophanes. Indeed, editorial constraints prevent accompanying pictures being printed, at least in the Athens volume; here the text is the focus, although admittedly this is not the case for all regions within the Greek world (the Thera gymnasium graffiti, for example, are mostly illustrated (for example, *IG XII 3*, 606, though not always in full: see Inglese 2008). Recent work has placed a long overdue emphasis on pictorial graffiti—the corpus of Langner (2001) is invaluable in this regard—but in itself perpetuates a dichotomy between textual and pictorial graffiti as separate kinds of evidence.

The hazy typological status of graffiti has resulted in a lack of critical attention being given to this material. Graffiti have not fitted neatly within disciplinary boundaries carved out by ancient history, philology, art history and archaeology. Indeed, one of the difficulties in defining graffiti is that there is no systematic use of the term within these disciplines: ‘graffiti’ is used to describe items as disparate as trademarks (Johnston 1979; Vanhove 2006; Domaradzka 2007), dedications (Bernand 1972; Kenzelmann Pfyffer et al. 2005), sexual insults (Varone 2002) or drawings of gladiators (Langner 2001). The line between some graffiti and more ‘formal’ inscriptions is necessarily not easy to draw firmly as neither can be considered solely in terms of planning, formality, permanence, nor audience. The definition of graffiti is itself, therefore, contextual (see Smith 1986).

Perhaps one way forward is to consider graffiti-writing itself as an event (on writing as event see Harris 1995: 39) and a number of chapters here deal with the performative aspects of graffiti (Chaniotis, Keegan, Zadorojnyi). One might then see the material remains as an object which has been created by this event, and therefore view graffiti-writing as a particular relationship between a surface, text, image, author and audience. If writing is an event which becomes an object, the interpretation of graffiti turns the object into an event again. Teasing out these constituent parts of the life of a graffito is not a *reductio ad absurdum*, but instead has the benefit of highlighting the dynamism of this material; it makes it clear that interpretation is not a ‘one-off’ end-game, but a process which continually changes over time and context. One of the central questions tackled throughout this volume is precisely the question of definition, so we offer no universal solution here.

Given that graffiti are increasingly studied both as a category of evidence and as part of broader archaeological and textual toolkits, it is now necessary to treat it with further methodological rigour despite the slippery problem of definition. It is necessary, most importantly, to consider graffiti contextually. This context is not simply a matter of archaeological provenance, but of temporal and spatial context in the immediate and broader scales, as well as cultural context, and context within broader understandings of both the practice and materiality of writing and of literacy and orality in the ancient world.

TOWARDS NEW APPROACHES TO ANCIENT GRAFFITI

One question we hope to raise in this volume is whether we might more usefully consider graffiti not only as informal writing, or as simply scratches on walls (or elsewhere), but as a form of writing practice. We also hope to illuminate here the relationship between the act of writing and the thing being written, or drawn, upon in a particular physical and sociocultural context. Indeed the very *presence* of graffiti (and, as far as we can tell, its ubiquity across the ancient world) implies a potential audience much wider than, for instance, that for scrolls or book-rolls. Similarly, unlike other more ‘formal’ forms of writing, there is often no necessary prerequisite of money or skill, nor even literacy for the production and/or consumption of graffiti (see for example Huntley, this volume). This has implications, of course, for how we might interpret the material.

Dialogues of Graffiti

In a recent article, Milnor interprets the ‘literary’ graffiti in Pompeii as an ‘act’ rather than a ‘text’, and this is akin to one of the aspects of graffiti described above, namely that graffiti-writing is both an event and an object. Graffiti, she argues, document ‘not simply the sentiments [. . . the] words express but the *practice* of writing those words on the wall’ (Milnor 2009: 293, our emphasis). This is insightful, but it is necessary to go further and also consider the audience of graffiti once it is made. As Benefiel explores here, the idea of dialogue is useful in this regard (see also Benefiel 2010); sometimes the graffiti themselves guide us in how they should be situated not only in relation to one another, but also within a social discourse. In a number of examples (not just those discussed by Benefiel in Pompeii), graffiti cluster and respond very clearly to one another—as texts/images ‘speaking’ to each other and their surroundings, as well as to a viewer. On a basic level, this in itself highlights that the audience is composed at least in part of other graffiti-writers. But this can be nuanced further. Here, for example, Mairs emphasises the competitive nature of graffiti-writing in hard-to-reach places and the hierarchies which this reveals.

Perhaps one of the reasons that graffiti as a form of evidence have been marginalised is because (in Saussurian terms) there has been an emphasis on writing as representing verbal language and communication rather than as something which is visual and material (Harris 1995, 2000). The graffiti which are considered within this volume are not only textual, but also pictorial and as such can often be viewed as being in dialogue with one another as text and image. Indeed, as recent work has shown, the distinction between text and image is a largely artificial one, and this is equally true with regard to graffiti: pictorial and textual examples often occur together. Graffiti, therefore, should form an important model for the interplay between text and image, and how these were understood together and viewed in Greco-Roman antiquity, but recent discussions all but ignore this contribution (Goldhill and Osborne 1994; Newby and Leader-Newby 2007). The graffiti presented in this volume suggest, however, that in many contexts it might be more useful to consider writing as a unifying category rather than thinking of *either* texts *or* images. What a number of graffiti show is that these categories are, in practice, rather imprecise: words were sometimes used to make images, and images could be understood as 'words', conveying meaning outside of traditional understandings of literacy (see for example the pictorial graffiti discussed by Chaniotis or Huntley, this volume, or the architect Cresces' name, which appears in the shape of a boat at Pompeii: *CIL* 4.4755).⁸ The distinction between text and image is not hard and fast (Frantz 1998: 811) and the interplay between them should be an important part of interpreting this evidence.

The Temporality and Materiality of Graffiti

In addition to the relationships between different graffiti and between images and texts, something which can emerge from careful consideration of the spaces which graffiti inhabit is temporality. Whether in terms of a palimpsest of graffiti on a single wall, or the relationship formed between different graffiti as a person moved through an ancient city (Franklin 1986), the relationship between graffiti and new ways in which we might understand ancient experience is clearly brought out in this volume (Keegan, Huntley, Volioti). Again, we have a range of evidence and meanings: a charcoal mark on a wall in a house in Pompeii (Benefiel, page 37–9) does not have the same claims to permanence as a prayer inscribed on the rock at a sanctuary (Mairs, page 161). But as Keegan's chapter argues, graffiti—because of their ubiquity within the ancient city—are in fact more 'present' in the world than other texts.

The layers of graffiti which are found at many sites can give a temporal depth to our interpretations. At El Kanais, for instance, the practice of making graffiti goes back millennia (see Mairs, this volume). The visibility of graffiti means that they might relate to the creation of sites of communal or cultural memory, as is explored by Taylor and Keegan. Taylor argues that

graffiti made in a rural Attic landscape are one means of creating a place (perhaps a place for people who had no other). Keegan deals with memory from a more cognitive perspective, and uses the variety of ways individuals remember as a means of organising graffiti. Writing on an object, a building, or a landscape, can, therefore, be a means of laying claim to it, in the same way that monumental inscriptions can claim public spaces. At El Kanais it is not a resident community, but travellers who make their mark in the eastern Egyptian desert as a way of dealing with the harsher aspects of their environment.

We might also think of graffiti writing as one way to explore the link between materials and bodily engagements, since writing has ‘an irreducible bodily component’ (Connerton 1989: 76). This can be seen both in the practice of making a graffito, and in subsequent encounters with it. The physical form of graffiti and the surfaces on which they were made is crucial for their understanding, and indeed, as our opening graffito above shows, some go so far as to engage directly with the materiality of the surface on which they were written. This allows for a contextual specificity, as graffiti are texts and images which we can situate in such a way so as to begin to reconstruct interactions people might have had with them (as Benefiel details here in the context of a Pompeian house). Graffiti on structures are a form of text which inherently gives us much of the context of its reading (for reading in a cultural context, and not simply as a cognitive act, see Johnson 2000: 602–3). Individual graffiti might then be considered not only as they relate to particular individuals but also particular communities. Here, for example, Baird uses the graffiti of Dura-Europos to examine the presence of the military community within the town.

READING GRAFFITI, WRITING GRAFFITI: GRAFFITI AND LITERACY

One of the paradoxes of the current orthodoxy on ancient graffiti, as detailed above, is that it is considered subversive or defacing (and therefore assumed to be made by the ‘lower classes’) yet often simultaneously taken to be evidence of literacy, which, if one follows Harris, was relatively limited in the ancient world (Harris 1989). Both of these assumptions should be questioned. As many of the papers in this volume demonstrate, the presence of written graffiti does not directly indicate the literacy of the writer nor that of their audience. Mairs, for example, shows how short texts at the sanctuary of Pan at El Kanais may well have been produced through a process of copying, and we must allow that other written expressions were similarly (re-)produced (one might think of the Vergilian graffiti of Pompeii in this regard: see further Milnor 2009; also Benefiel this volume). Likewise, it is misleading to suggest that the presence of pictorial graffiti indicates that the writer was *not* literate; this is clearly untenable: people

might choose to draw instead of write. Instead, the choice to communicate in a written, though perhaps not always *textual* form, should be taken seriously and situated within the multiple reading and writing cultures within any specific society. As Macdonald makes clear, it is important to recognise that there is a difference between non-literacy in an oral environment and illiteracy in a literate environment (Macdonald 2005a: 51).

Recent work has emphasised that 'literacy' is best conceptualised not as a single thing a person does or does not have, but suggests instead that we might consider different people in different contexts having a multiplicity of different 'literacies' (Thomas 1992, 2009). Graffiti, both written and pictorial, have much to offer this debate (see Chaniotis, Mairs or Benefiel this volume). Aside from the 'extent of literacy' question raised by Harris (1989), graffiti have been used to provide evidence for the introduction of writing, but without much discussion given to the different contexts of production or reception (Stoddart and Whitley 1988; Powell 1991; Thomas 1992: 52–61). Recent exceptions to this (Macdonald 2005a; Milnor 2009) serve to emphasise the exclusion of this material from other discussions of literacy and orality (Worthington and Foley 2002; Mackie 2004; Cooper 2007; Mackay 2008). But, if we consider writing to be a system of semiological communication (Harris 1995, 2000) it might be necessary to reconsider our definition of literacy in light of the communicative power of the pictorial and non-verbal graffiti considered here. The idea of writing as a form of communication, it seems, is complicated by the combination of different textual and pictorial signs.

One important aspect of recent literacy research is the distinction between reading and writing, and the acknowledgement that these skills do not necessarily go hand-in-hand (Macdonald 2005a: 52). Again, graffiti are well-placed to contribute. Indeed, the separation of these aspects of literacy emphasises the importance of both the production of writing and its audience, and it can even situate reading and writing within a performative framework (see a number of the papers in Johnson and Parker 2009). This is useful because it emphasises not only the relationship between the texts themselves, but also considers the audience, or rather, the audiences: some graffiti literally ask to be read (*CIL* 4.1751).

An emphasis on reading and writing as separate 'literate events' is important for asking 'who wrote?' and 'who read?'. The latter question in particular has received attention in recent years with specific emphasis on reading culture in general (Svenbro 1993; Johnson 2000; Corbier 2006; Johnson and Parker 2009). When Johnson writes 'in ancient society, that reading was largely an elitist phenomenon was accepted as a matter of course' (Johnson 2000: 615), he is referring specifically to the reading of book-rolls and of literature. But in many cases graffiti problematise this model of reading. The dialogues which we can distinguish within some clusters of graffiti give us valuable information with which we can reconstruct different kinds of reading communities from those that Johnson

envisages (see Benefiel or Taylor, this volume). Further, the physical space in which graffiti appear (and sheer volume of material) suggests that this form of writing (textual and pictorial) was accessible to a much wider audience than had access to other forms of reading materials. Can it, therefore, really be asserted that reading was fundamentally elitist? In fact, it seems that different kinds of literacies were ‘much more joined up’ than hitherto expected (Woolf 2009: 47).

The graffiti discussed in this volume suggest that reading was not exclusively situated within elite discourse. Or rather, they suggest that whilst some reading events are certainly elitist and used to construct high culture (or aspirations to what is perceived as high culture), not all reading events should be associated with elites (compare Zadorojnyi and Taylor, this volume). Even when graffiti appear within wealthy private houses, such structures include spaces through which a wide variety of people of different ages and statuses moved, and saw and responded to the texts and images there (Baird, Benefiel, Huntley, this volume). Just as writing (as well as orality) can be used to control information or widen access to it (Camassa 1988; Finkelberg 2007), the creation of reading communities could reinforce an elite sense of identity, but reading was not solely situated within elite concerns (for another example of this, see Eidinow and Taylor 2010). Some of the evidence presented here suggests that Johnson’s model should be further nuanced and, indeed, expanded throughout the social scale.

GRAFFITI AS EVIDENCE

Thinking about the elite nature (or otherwise) of reading events leads us to a further problem which appears commonly in previous research, that is the assumption that graffiti are ‘written mostly by members of the lower classes’ or the ‘less educated members of society’ (Franklin 1991: 80; Wallace 2005: v). Frequently, graffiti have been implicitly understood as relating to the ‘common people’ or ‘everyday life’ (Mouritsen 1988: 9, 17; Lang 1988: 3; see also Franklin 1991: 77) whereas more formal inscriptions (and literature) are generally associated with elites. This is, however, a false dichotomy. As a number of chapters in this volume demonstrate (Baird, Benefiel, Mairs, Zadorojnyi), the association of ‘informal’ with ‘low class’ is often simply incorrect. Zadorojnyi argues that certain types of graffiti are very much associated with—and used as a trope by—the political and literary elite. Both Baird and Benefiel discuss graffiti which appear *inside* wealthy houses. Mairs demonstrates that graffiti express the same concern for religious practice and reflects the same hierarchies regardless of their perceived formality. Other examples can be found: in Thera the graffiti belong to a gymnasium environment which is almost always interpreted as part of elite culture and by their nature demonstrate claims to superiority (Inglese 2008; Chaniotis forthcoming b); election notices in Pompeii detail

the political aspirations of municipal elites (Mouritsen 1988: 114–22; Chia-via 2002); some graffiti should be taken to have the same monumentality as other inscriptions. Therefore, the association between a simple or ‘informal’ text/image inscribed, scratched, charcoaled or painted onto a surface, and (low) social status is problematic in the extreme.

This is not to argue, however, that graffiti can never be associated with non-elite groups. In some cases, graffiti *can* be used as evidence for people and groups who are otherwise marginalised (such as children or slaves), but this needs to be argued for rather than assumed. Funari, for example, suggests that certain types of pictorial graffiti in Pompeii express aspects of popular culture through caricature thereby critiquing existing power structures and replacing them with alternate narratives (Funari 1993; Funari and Garrafoli 2009). Whilst some of these conclusions do not stand up to close scrutiny (the semiotic ‘meanings’ of Funari’s physical characteristics are rather simplistically drawn), his work is admirable insofar as it attempts to actually demonstrate that certain graffiti were associated with certain social groups rather than simply assuming they were.

The linguistic analysis of Kruschwitz and Halla-aho also argues that some of the Pompeian graffiti were likely to have been produced by specific social groups, namely young people (Kruschwitz and Halla-aho 2007: 37). This observation is important when it is paired with that of Huntley in this volume, since she argues that children’s hands are identifiable within this material. If this is the case, we might then be able to identify a continuity of writing practice throughout the lifecycle (at least in Pompeii) which previously has been undetected; writing is not confined to elite groups, at least not those traditionally defined by class or status, but rather a whole range of different groups assert their presence through this activity. Considering graffiti in context, therefore, produces a much more complex and socially diverse picture of both the production and reception of this material in the ancient world, but at the same time a contextual approach is necessary if we are to hope to study communities which are otherwise not very visible (see also Baird or Taylor, this volume).

GRAFFITI RECONSIDERED

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the graffiti of Pompeii (Kruschwitz and Halla-aho 2007; Kruschwitz 2010; Mouritsen forthcoming), and scholars have begun to turn to this evidence to examine groups otherwise difficult to identify archaeologically, such as slaves (Webster 2008), to discuss what graffiti can elucidate about the spaces in which they are situated (Benefel 2010), or to contribute to questions about literacy (Milnor 2009). Graffiti from outside Pompeii have much to contribute to these debates, to shape future discussions and pose additional questions in themselves. It is time, then, to shine a light on this material.

This volume, therefore, discusses ancient graffiti in a variety of different contexts. It does not claim to be a comprehensive compendium of all forms of graffiti in the ancient world, nor does it argue for a single cohesive definition or interpretation of this material. Rather, through a series of case studies with a wide chronological and geographical scope, it emphasises the importance of contextualisation and the different kinds of interpretations which may be developed from this. Indeed, dynamic and culturally relevant interpretations of graffiti are perhaps more profitable than one-size-fits-all explanations.

For example, the tension between graffiti as something which occurs in public spaces and that in nominally private spaces, including houses, is explored by a number of papers, as are questions of the status, or (in)formality, of graffiti. In the first chapter, Benefiel confronts the fact that in Pompeii, many homes, including those of the wealthy, had what might appear to a modern observer to be random writing on their walls. In the House of the Four Styles she argues that the act of inscribing graffiti was a social activity in the central and most visible spaces of the home. These graffiti tell a number of stories, including those of women gathering together. Introducing the notion of dialogue among and between graffiti, which is explored throughout this volume, Benefiel demonstrates how writing on the wall might be used for practical purposes, or didactic ones, or might come about as the result of this social activity.

Baird on the other hand explores the hundreds of textual and pictorial graffiti and dipinti which were found at Dura-Europos on the Syrian Euphrates when it was excavated in the first half of the twentieth century. Like Benefiel, Baird also examines texts found on walls inside houses, as well as in other contexts, and the behaviours associated with their creation, but questions whether the term 'graffiti' is always a meaningful label for this writing. By situating the pictorial and textual graffiti of Dura in their architectural, urban, and sociocultural context, she examines how this context can inform the meaning of these graffiti, and vice versa, and how we might integrate these texts into synthetic studies.

Huntley, too, focuses on graffiti inside houses, but with an emphasis on those which she identifies as likely to have been made by children. She studies material from Pompeii and Herculaneum in light of research within the discipline of developmental psychology and suggests that the production of graffiti by children conforms to set patterns and rules; it is not mere acts of whimsy nor is it random or meaningless. Graffiti are therefore used in this chapter as evidence to access children's lives, often argued to be archaeologically invisible. From this investigation it is possible to see how Roman children represented their world and how they experienced, appropriated and manipulated space.

Taylor also suggests that certain types of graffiti can be used as evidence for people who are difficult to detect within the literary or archaeological record. She analyses two sites of rock-cut graffiti in Attica and argues

that this material demonstrates how particular subaltern groups created and negotiated their own communities. The graffiti explored here were found near quarries and it is argued that quarry workers were prominent as both writers and readers of the material. The content of the graffiti, which consists of names, footprints and sexual insults, suggests that these people were concerned with being socially connected to others, wanted to express certain types of emotion (love, desire, hate) and demonstrate their masculinity. Seen within the context of the epigraphic habit, this material demonstrates the pervasiveness of epigraphic culture within Athens; that it was widely accessible.

In contrast, Zadorojnyi argues, by examining the literature written under the Principate, that graffiti are a necessary part of elite discourse. By exploring the ways graffiti are used as an intersection of elite ideologies of power and writtenness, he assesses the attitudes of these writers towards graffiti against the background of their cultural and literary *paideia*. Graffiti, he shows, are held up as representing a socio-cultural otherness, but at the same time they empower political dissent amongst the elite. They therefore expose a fault line in the ancient concept of literate culture as a political medium and offer some interesting perspectives on the negotiation of political debate through the textual surface.

The physical surface, and the materiality of writing, is the focus of Volioti's chapter in which she examines the human experience of a graffito on a black-figured lekythos from a burial context in Thessaly. The graffito carved onto the underside of this vessel allows exploration of the ways in which an object such as this—and by extension the writing upon it—was socialised by its user and reveals both the possibilities and ambiguities of such investigations. In this case, handling, sensing and using this vessel created an intimate relationship between the object (and the writing which appears on it) and the human body. This case study therefore demonstrates that the physical context of the object on which writing appears is a crucial part of its interpretation. Application of these conclusions to wall-writing are paramount.

Mairs picks up some of these themes in her examination of the rock-faces around the ancient temple of the pharaoh Seti I at El Kanais in the Egyptian Eastern Desert. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods this site became a popular place for passing travellers to leave graffiti. Many of these consist of clusters of names and formulaic prayers to the Greek god Pan for safe passage through the desert. She argues that while these brief 'tags' are sometimes intriguingly personal and informal, the act of 'making one's mark' at El Kanais was not undertaken casually. Individuals chose to record only very specific pieces of information, and many of the writers show keen awareness of the other graffiti around them. Issues of formality and informality are examined here.

Clustering of graffiti is also discussed by Keegan. Keegan explores what might be learned if we classify graffiti by the types of memory they

represent. In doing so he examines the clustering of graffiti in certain parts of the city in order to view them within their wider topographical context. By drawing an analogy between graffiti writing in Pompeii and modern electronic modes of communication (such as text messaging or blogging), he demonstrates that graffiti act as an interface between oral and literate culture. The spatial clustering of graffiti, therefore, represent the autobiographical memories of pedestrians moving through the city of Pompeii. These memory-traces, he argues, share the knowledge and experience of the inhabitants of the town.

Finally, Chaniotis brings together some of the themes of the volume by discussing the richly preserved graffiti in the urban environment at Aphrodisias. He highlights how graffiti, because of their non-monumental, private, and often spontaneous nature, sometimes reflect in a more direct way than other categories of inscription the thoughts and feelings of people. Many of these graffiti can be explained in view of conflict and competition: obscene texts and images tell us more about competition and power than they do about sexuality; superiority and domination are the prevailing ideas here. Religious conflicts are also traceable through the graffiti of Aphrodisias: Christians, Jews and pagans express their religious identities through graffiti and vie for space within the city. The Aphrodisias graffiti are vital for understanding the social history of the city and its inhabitants.

This volume, therefore, demonstrates the diversity, rather than the unity, of ancient graffiti, and the range of ways it might be used as evidence. Viewing these examples side-by-side allows us to recognise the heterogeneity of the material, but also highlight points of contact. Bilingual soldiers' graffiti at Dura, for example, which clearly expresses individual identities in Greek but group identities in Latin, might help us approach the bilingual graffiti of Pompeii (Biville 2003). The materiality of a graffito on a pot highlights the importance of considering the physical contexts of reading and writing and demonstrates the need to avoid decontextualising writing from the objects/structures it appears on. The spatial layout of texts in a house in Pompeii might help us assess the range of spatial considerations of those at, say, El Kanais (and vice versa), as well as highlighting the possible varieties of interactions people might have with them. Small-scale non-urban graffiti within the Attic countryside highlights how different types of writing practices are particularly resonant for different communities, and this is important when examining detailed aspects of larger sites with a bigger corpus of evidence.

By examining graffiti within the urban landscape, at sites such as Pompeii, Dura and Aphrodisias, we can see the ubiquity of this type of writing practice in ancient cities, but we can also highlight differences not only in content but in how the marks were produced, their audience and historical meaning. The broad correlation observable at Pompeii between the content of the text and whether it was painted or inscribed is not replicated

elsewhere, not even at Herculaneum where different social concerns produced different written environments (Solin 1973). In cities like Dura or Aphrodisias there are further differences which cannot solely be ascribed to chronological or regional variation, nor directly to the circumstances of the city's destruction. Religious texts, like those that we find at El Kanais, appear much more commonly at Dura than at Pompeii or Aphrodisias; acclamations appear frequently at Aphrodisias but not at Pompeii or Dura.⁹ Sexual insults and erotic images are common at Pompeii, and are well represented at Aphrodisias, but do not seem to appear at all at Dura (at least none have been recorded). Instead, we must acknowledge that graffiti-writing, whilst having some overarching similarities across the Mediterranean world, was configured differently within different communities. This is confirmed by comparison with graffiti which is found outside of the urban landscape, at El Kanais or in Attica.

The widespread appearance of graffiti in the ancient world—on walls or objects, inside and outside buildings, in public and private spaces, highly visible and concealed from view—shows how misdirected modern ideas about the illicit nature of the activity are and highlight that it certainly was not (in most incidences) considered defacing (though see *CIL* 11.575/ Sabbatini Tumolesi and Gregori 1989: no. 27, an inscription from the amphitheatre at Forlimpopolesi, Etruria: 'may you, bill-poster, have good luck if you don't write here'). The fact that graffiti do not only appear within urban contexts but also in non-urban settings and even in the literary consciousness of ancient writers, shows how commonplace it was. Although there are many parallels which can be drawn between the different examples discussed here, this volume clearly demonstrates the diversity of many graffiti practices and the importance of contextualisation for understanding this material. Graffiti are a rich source indeed for the study of the ancient world.

NOTES

1. This graffito is found in a number of places in different parts of Pompeii: *CIL* 4.1904 and 1906 are both from the basilica, whereas 2461 was found at the large theatre, and 2487 is from the amphitheatre. On these texts see Kruschwitz 2008: 240–2; Milnor 2009: 292–3; Keegan, Zadorojnyi, this volume.
2. For a breakdown of the graffiti recorded in *CIL* 4 see table 9.1 page 167.
3. In some places, notably Pompeii, these generally represent different types of wall-writing: broadly speaking painted marks tend to encompass texts such as electoral notices or adverts for gladiatorial games, whereas scratched marks are more varied in content. See also Franklin 1991: 78, Solin 2008: 60. Outside of Pompeii (even in Herculaneum) these distinctions do not hold: see also Solin 1973.
4. Most modern graffiti are, in a technical sense, *dipinti*.
5. Pompeii, Dura, Aphrodisias, Hymettos and El Kanais are discussed by papers in this volume. For graffiti in Delos see Severyns 1927; Basch 1973;

- Moretti 1998; Ephesos: Taeuber 2005; Abydos: Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1919; Rutherford 2003; Alikı (Thasos): Servais 1980.
6. For the (late Enlightenment) origins of *vandalisme* see Merrills 2009. 'Topoi inscriptions' are also found at Priene and Aphrodisias among other places: *IPriene* 313; Roueché 1989: nos. 187–232 but perhaps have different functions at both of these sites.
 7. However, Osborne and Pappas (2007: 150) consider a pre-firing mark a 'graffito'. As they are aware, the implication is that this graffito 'was an intentional part of the original aesthetic plan of the object's surface'. Vanhove (2006: 74) likewise interprets marks on a pithos and two amphorai from Thorikos as pre-firing 'graffiti' which 'point to a primary stage of trading'. In its intentionality, as part of the original design of the object, this use of the term 'graffito' is not its usual deployment.
 8. There are a number of *Buchstabenschiffe* in Pompeii (see also Langner 2001: nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 24, 25, 27; respectively *CIL* 4.1764, 9039, 8991, 5428, 4225, 4742, 4716, 8020, 8792b, 8030, 4950) as well as other 'non-conventional' arrangements of words which form pictures, the most well-known of which is *CIL* 4.1595 (Langner 2001: no. 30) a poem which forms the picture of a snake. See further Franklin 1991: 92–4. On the visual impact of texts in general: Kruschwitz 2008.
 9. The *emnēsthē* formula, which is so common at Dura also appears in Ephesos: Taeuber 2005: GR 5, 8, 24, 47, 106. See further Baird, this volume.

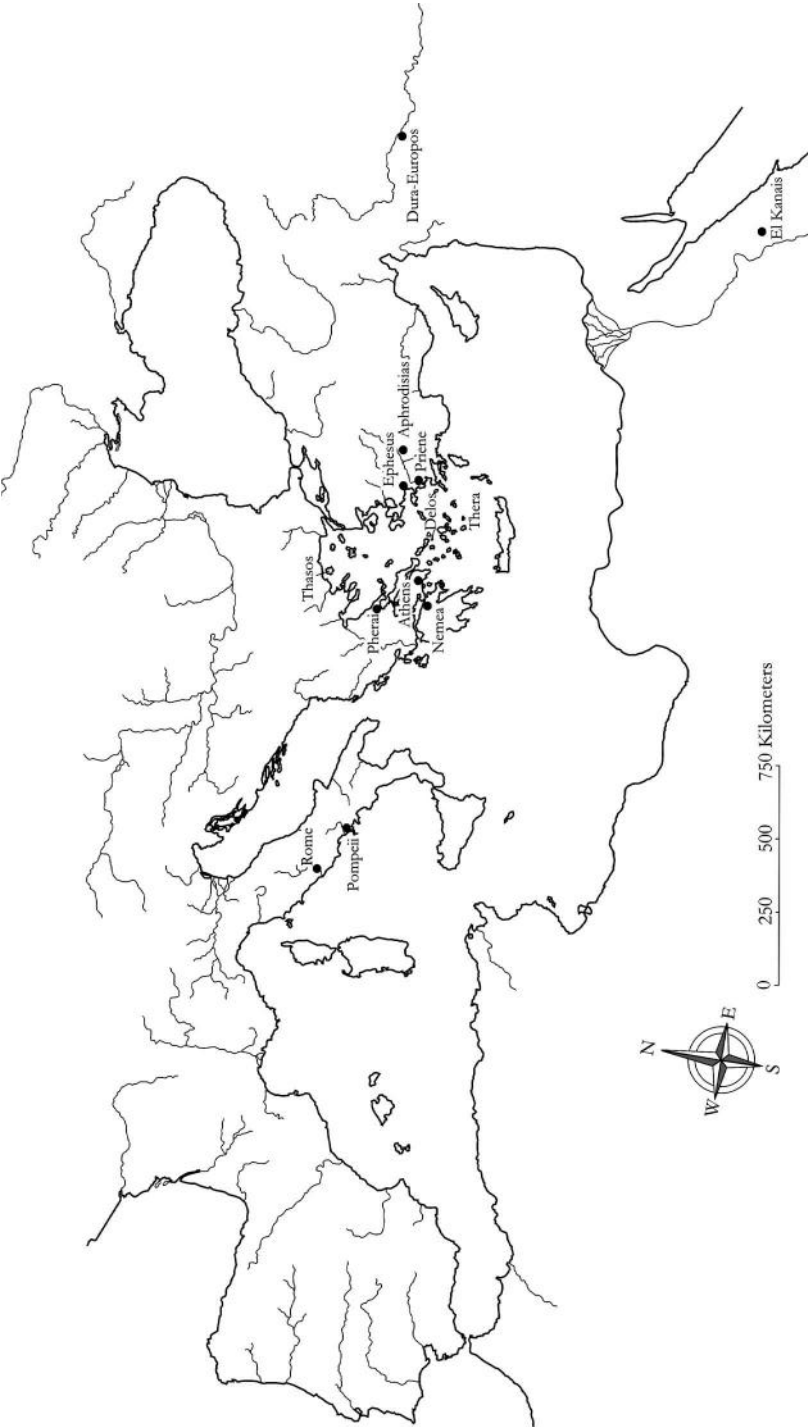


Figure 1.1 Map of the Mediterranean showing principle sites discussed in this volume.

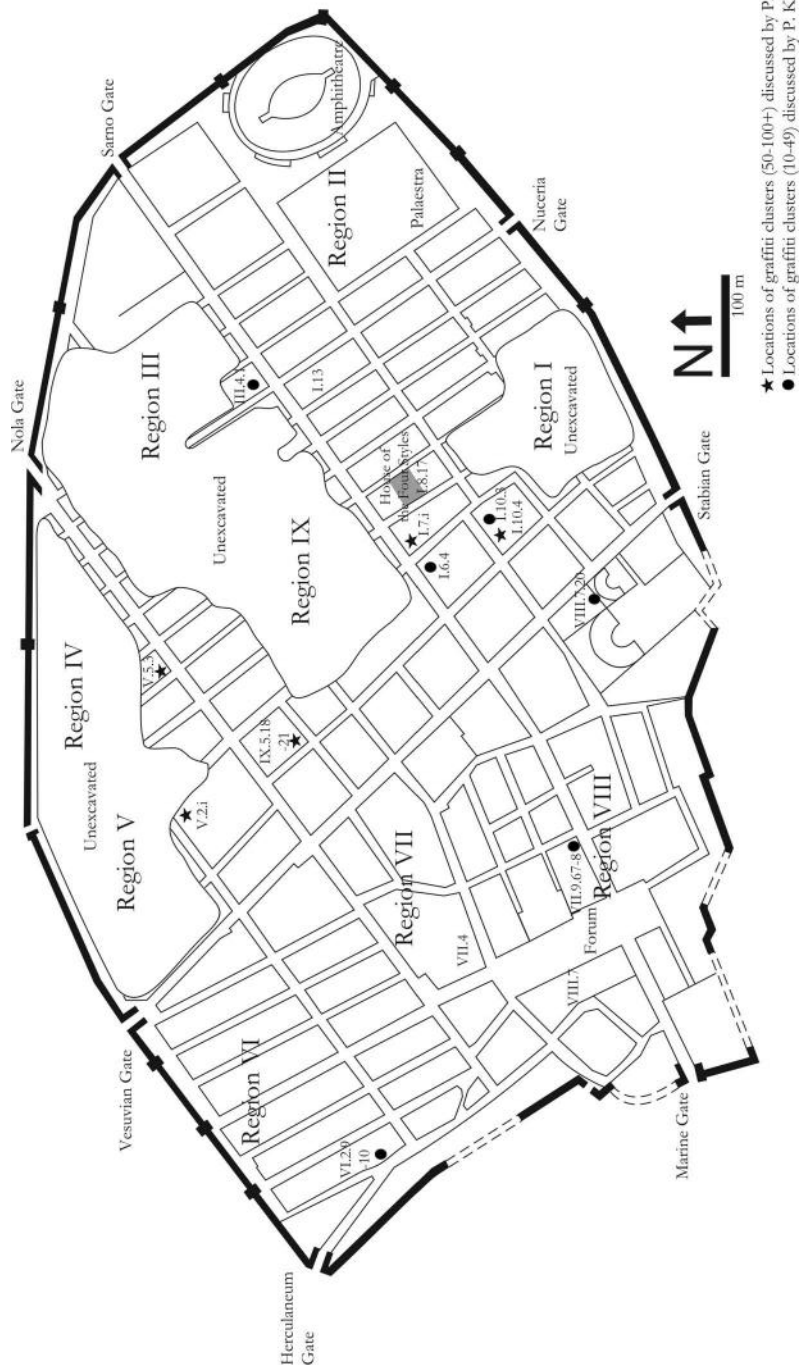


Figure 1.2 Plan of Pompeii, showing parts of the site discussed by Benefiel, Huntley and Keegan.

2 Dialogues of Graffiti in the House of the Four Styles at Pompeii (*Casa Dei Quattro Stili*, I.8.17, 11)*

Rebecca R. Benefiel

We might be tempted to imagine an unbroken connection between ancient wall-inscriptions and contemporary graffiti. The electoral programmata of Pompeii recall our own political campaign posters, and we can accept graffiti left by travellers on the wall of an inn or tavern easily enough. But what about the significant numbers of ancient graffiti that are found even within private homes? There, it is clear that the underlying biases of modern experience will misdirect us.¹ Even the modern significance of the word ‘graffiti’ embraces basic premises that may not apply to their ancient counterparts, such as that they are written by marginalised elements of society or that they are destructive in nature. In this chapter I use the term ‘graffiti’ in its formal sense: writings or drawings that have been incised into a surface.²

The aim of this chapter is to confront the fact that in ancient Pompeii, many homes, including wealthy, grand and beautifully decorated residences, had what might appear to a modern observer to be random writing on their walls. There is simply no equivalent in our contemporary society for the frequent and numerous messages that are found written on the walls inside the majority of the homes in Pompeii.³ By choosing to examine graffiti in a residential rather than a public space, therefore, I hope to leave aside modern expectations of graffiti in order to analyse more freely these ancient writings on their own terms.

The majority of homes across the city of ancient Pompeii contained graffiti within their interiors, with certain larger homes featuring up to 70 examples or more. In order to understand what this means both for the act of inscribing graffiti and for the nature of the house as an inscribed space, I offer the following examination of the House of the Four Styles (also known as the *Casa dei Quattro Stili* or the *Casa di LVP*). The few systematic studies of Pompeian graffiti by location so far have focused on some of the largest residential edifices in the area (the villa San Marco at Stabiae, the House of Maius Castricius and the Insula of the Menander at Pompeii: Varone 1999; Benefiel 2010).⁴ These spacious residences feature high numbers of graffiti, possibly connected to the large numbers of

residents, clients and visitors who passed through their halls. The House of the Four Styles, by contrast, is a house of moderate size located in region I of Pompeii (see Figure 1.2 page 19). It therefore complements the studies of larger residences by offering a view of a house that served a social group other than the region's elite. Consideration of this moderate-sized home furthermore underscores the fact that in ancient Pompeii wall-inscriptions regularly appear within residences of all dimensions.

In addition to size and its optimal level of preservation—the graffiti discovered here remain preserved for the most part and are, therefore, able to be studied in their larger environment—the House of the Four Styles is most appealing for the story its graffiti tell. One could argue that every building in Pompeii has a story; graffiti left on the walls can identify individuals who were present there or who were being talked about, and hint at their thoughts and actions. Taken all together, these locations can present a picture of what spaces were appropriate for graffiti, what topics fascinated residents the most and who was involved in this means of written communication. The graffiti in the House of the Four Styles appear only in certain spaces, and their distribution through the house offers hints about the activities that took place there. One conversation among the graffiti centres on a group of women, a demographic segment all too often invisible in the archaeological record. A conglomeration of written and figural graffiti highlights the act of drawing on the walls and reveals ancient attitudes about the use of wall space. A look into the House of the Four Styles and its graffiti thus tells the story of women gathering together, of someone learning how to draw a boat, and about the act of inscribing graffiti as a social activity in the central and most visible spaces of the home.

THE HOUSE OF THE FOUR STYLES

The house's alternate names, the *Casa di LVP* and the *Casa dei Quattro Stili*, were bestowed on the basis of a graffito and from the painted wall decoration respectively (Eschebach 1993: 46-7; CTP 2.230; Della Corte 1965: 331). It is better known by the latter name, since the house preserves all four of the Pompeian styles of wall-painting (on the overall decoration of the house see Gallo 1989; PPM 1990: 1.847–913; in general: Ling 1991). This house was excavated during the late 1930s as part of the immense project of excavations extending along the *via dell'Abbondanza* that unearthed large sections of *regio* I. Since the quality and preservation of the wall-paintings in this house was so high, a roof was quickly constructed to cover the building. The painted plaster covering the walls here has thus remained in good condition while other wall surfaces across the archaeological site that had been left exposed to the sun and elements of nature have often faded, been reduced to their rough underlayer, or crumbled into bits. The House of the Four Styles furthermore received a campaign of restoration in

1975. Its state of preservation, wall decoration and the dedicated study it received by Alessandra Gallo have made it one of the better-known Pompeian houses of moderate size.⁵

Yet even this moderately sized Pompeian house is larger than most modern residences. It measures nearly 600 m² (ca. 4,000 sq. ft.) on the ground floor; a first floor above, now lost but which was accessed via the stairway in the rear portion of the house, would have offered additional living and storage space. The entrance of the house leads into a grand tetrastyle atrium. Most of the living space of the house is centred around the atrium (rooms 1–15; Figures 2.1, 2.2).⁶ A garden in the rear of the house (room 17) takes the place of a peristyle, and was visible from the atrium through a large window in the back wall of room 10 (and room 16).⁷ Yet rather than offering a formally planted garden that might function as additional reception space for clients and visitors, this garden consisted instead of a utilitarian workspace, flanked by a stable (room 20) and a kitchen, store-room and latrine (rooms 21–23). Life here came to an abrupt end with the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The frescoed rooms that may have once offered a pleasant view onto the garden (rooms 16 and 18) were being renovated at the time of the disaster. A horse in his stall was unable to flee; his skeleton was discovered in the stable (Gallo 1989: 21–7).

The House of the Four Styles is one of twelve properties in *insula* I.8, a city-block of mixed use comprising domestic spaces, industry and limited retail (Castiglione Morelli del Franco and Vitale 1989; Eschebach 1993). This city-block lies immediately to the south of the *via dell'Abbondanza*, is situated roughly midway between the forum and the amphitheatre, and follows the alignment of the eastern half of the city (see Figure 1.2, page 19). The *insula* is roughly the same size as those to the east of it, as well as the *insulae* in *regio* VI in the northern region of the city. While the houses in *regio* VI occupied the full width of the block, with entrances on the roads lying both to the east and west, the focus for the *insulae* lying to the south of the *via dell'Abbondanza* appears to have been to give to as many buildings as possible an entrance onto that street. The House of the Four Styles does not open onto the *via dell'Abbondanza*, but it is the only property that occupies the full width of this *insula*, with the main entrance to the house from the west and a secondary entrance into the garden area from the road lying to the east.

The graffiti of Pompeii are arranged topographically in *CIL* 4, which allows for relatively simple comparisons about the density of graffiti by building or area of the city. A quick survey of *CIL*, for example, yields 69 recorded graffiti in the sumptuously decorated House of Paquius Proculus at I.7.1 (*CIL* 4.8067–8135; Figure 1.2). The two houses to its east, by contrast, feature far fewer graffiti, with only four graffiti within I.7.2 (*CIL* 4.8136–8139) and 17 examples inscribed at I.7.7 (*CIL* 4.8144–8160). The House of the Four Styles, in the next block over, would seem to fall roughly in the middle, with 14 recorded graffiti in *CIL* (*CIL* 4.8212–8225).⁸ Yet



Figure 2.1 Floorplan of the House of the Four Styles with the locations of graffiti marked.

a closer look reveals the drawbacks to this kind of rapid comparison. In fact, several graffiti in the House of the Four Styles are clustered together under single entries. Furthermore, a series of drawings is noted in the comment at *CIL* 4.8215, but these do not receive their own numeration. The 14 entries in *CIL* thus unfortunately give us a misleading idea about the number of graffiti in this house. When each graffito is counted separately, the total reaches 34, but this is merely a first step. What a quantitative comparison does not communicate is how and where the graffiti appear within the house, and what sort of spatial impact they have. I therefore include an appendix to this chapter, a table listing each individual graffito in the House of the Four Styles, along with its locations and measurements (Table 2.1). This information will allow us to better gauge the presence of graffiti in the residence.

I have introduced elsewhere the model of the dialogue as a productive means by which to approach the study of ancient graffiti (Benefiel 2010). Graffiti communicate more if we lift them from the two-dimensional page



Figure 2.2 Atrium of the House of the Four Styles. Photo by author by permission of the Soprintendenza speciale per i beni archaeologici di Napoli e Pompei.

to which they have been consigned and consider them from a variety of perspectives. Fundamental is their immediate archaeological context, but it is also useful to understand them in a broader spatial and social environment. The dialogue serves as a valuable model of inquiry, as graffiti are often observed to participate in dialogue with each other. Yet, they can also be understood as being in dialogue with their surroundings. Additionally, it is useful to consider how different forms of graffiti—texts and drawings—might be in dialogue together. This chapter will therefore consider all three types of dialogue in the context of this house.

Dialogues Among Graffiti

Dialogues take place among the graffiti of Pompeii on walls throughout the city. Sometimes an inscribed message may have been conceived of as an opening salvo that anticipated an answer, such as the mutual greetings that were passed back and forth between Prima and Secundus at the opposite ends of the city-block I.10 (*CIL* 4.8270-8272; 8364–8367b). In other cases, a message inspired a response that the author may not have expected. Such was the case with a prayer that was committed to a wall in the town's basilica. The graffiti began, 'Agatho, the slave of Herennius, asks Venus', and halted in mid-sentence, perhaps concluded aloud or privately, but in a

non-written manner. To this message a different individual later inscribed his own conclusion with the none-too-pious request, 'I ask that he die'.⁹ Peter Keegan's chapter in this volume discusses several other locations in Pompeii where a passer-by could observe a dialogue taking place among graffiti on the walls (see page 178).

The House of the Four Styles features a lively, extensive dialogue of more than a dozen graffiti, which were inscribed in a room that has been identified as a *tablinum* (room 9). The ongoing conversation that these graffiti convey comprises a number of greetings passed back and forth among a group of friends. The phrase *vale* appears in nearly all the greetings, and is used to convey a message of 'take care/goodbye/farewell'. Messages such as 'Take care, Anthis!' 'Quartilla, bye!' and 'See you, Nicopolis!' were inscribed on the walls. An interest in addressing one's friends appears to have been the main motivation in the creation of these messages; inscribed greetings constitute 13 of the 14 graffiti in this room (see Table 2.1: cat. 15–28).

Greetings represent a significant portion of Pompeian graffiti (see Table 9.2, page 169). They are found throughout the city, scattered among both public places and residential locations. Usually brief, they generally contain the name of the addressee with the phrase *vale*, or the names of both addresser and addressee along with the greeting *salutem*. These greetings are often as simple as 'Sabinus to Proculus, greetings', a message inscribed within the brothel near the centre of town (*CIL* 4.2208: *Sabinus Proc[u]lo salutem*).¹⁰

Yet this group of messages in the House of the Four Styles is particularly significant for the fact that all five recipients of the greetings here are women. This can shed an interesting light on women's literacy in the ancient world, which has remained under-explored, at least in comparison with discussion of literacy in general.¹¹ Harris judged the literacy rate in ancient Italy to be around 15 per cent, with that of women significantly less (Harris 1989: 266). Yet this cluster of graffiti, as well as other examples from Pompeii, suggests that women may not have been completely shut out from participating in this act of written communication.

The analysis of these graffiti so far has been confined essentially to their content and has therefore focused on the types of names these women bear. Matteo Della Corte hypothesized that Quartilla was freeborn and a relative of the homeowner, while the other women named in the graffiti, with names common in the Greek world (Nicopolis, Euplia, Anthis and Cypare), were slaves (Della Corte 1965: 331–2). His suggestions have been repeated, with a focus on Quartilla as an inhabitant of the home and separated from the other women named in the graffiti.¹² Yet, this separation of Quartilla from the others ignores the context in which she was found. While Quartilla did receive an additional salutation in the vestibule of the house, she was fully integrated among the inscribed greetings that grace the walls of room 9. She does not receive more greetings than any other woman and the

messages mentioning her name appear on both the north and the east wall of the room, situated among the greetings addressed to the others.

Indeed, the shortcomings in analysing ancient graffiti solely by their content are illustrated effectively by the group of graffiti in this room. First and most importantly, such an approach misses the other information that ancient graffiti communicate. Secondly, as here, one is often reduced to trying to make do with little. Reliance on nomenclature, for example, to determine the status or ethnicity of a person is a notoriously slippery business (for discussion with particular reference to stone inscriptions see Salomies 2001). Graffiti, like these, frequently consist of a single name, and it is most often the personal name of an individual. However, names do not necessarily map onto status categories. The name Rufus, for example, was often given to slaves, but in Pompeii it is also a popular cognomen among the city's ruling class (Castrén 1975: 264). Similarly, a Greek name does not necessarily mean that the individual was a slave (Allison 2001). Indeed, one of the candidates for duovir in the final decades of Pompeii's history was Gaius Iulius Polybius. The women's names in these messages of greeting are found only infrequently elsewhere in Pompeii, where women's names appear far less often than men's. One single-endorser campaign poster, however, does name the supporter 'Chypare', an aspirated spelling of *Cypare* (CIL 4.99 Add. p. 460). To consign the four women with Greek names here to slavery, therefore, is perhaps to do too much with too little.

Instead of focusing squarely on the written content of these individual graffiti, let us expand our view by approaching this cluster of graffiti as a whole. The large number of graffiti inscribed here and the unity of message that they all share suggest that these writers were involved in a continuing conversation. But who exactly was involved in the conversation?

To begin with, no matter who was responsible for writing these graffiti, the graffiti in this room present multiple messages of greeting directed to several different women. Since these were direct addresses and more than a dozen examples were inscribed, it seems clear that the writers expected their recipients to be able to read the messages addressed to them. These are by no means the only Pompeian graffiti written to women. It must be assumed therefore that at least certain women would be able to read such messages.

So, who then was writing? We might assume that since a higher percentage of men than women were literate, a group of men composed these greetings to the women in their lives, or at least to the women in their lives that particular evening. The desire and interest of these men, we might then assume, whatever the activities taking place around them, was to extend warm wishes to these five women. A gendered approach to this evidence, however, might envision an alternate scenario and consider whether a number of women were interested in exchanging greetings with each other.¹³

Here, the broader context regarding the culture of writing graffiti at Pompeii may shed some light on the question. Anonymity is a central characteristic of many modern graffiti. In the ancient world, the opposite was true. Writing on the walls involved the thrill of being able to write and knowing how to create text, and many who did so in ancient Pompeii wanted that recognition. Pompeians signed their drawings (*CIL* 4.1847: ‘Rufio painted this’); they signed quotations of poetry (*CIL* 4.8891: ‘We came here desiring, Cornelius Martialis writes this’); they even signed their names just to register their presence (*CIL* 4.2993a: ‘Lucius Livius Severus writes this’; *CIL* 4.6702: ‘Aufidius was here. Bye’). Anonymity was not a major concern for the writer of ancient graffiti. In fact, the largest subset of Pompeian graffiti consists simply of names (Langner 2001: 22–4; on names in a different context, Taylor this volume, page 94–6).

The greetings that frequently occur among the graffiti of Pompeii operate within the same system, highlighting individuals and groups by name. The majority of inscribed greetings also include the name of the writer. In one message of greeting inscribed in the basilica, a third person physically wrote the greetings, and so the names of all three parties appeared in the message (*CIL* 4.1934: *Alchimus Pyrrho sal(utem) | scribit Samannara*; ‘Alchimus to Pyrrhus, greetings. Samannara writes this’). Greetings that included the salutation *vale* were addressed to the recipient, and could be as simple a message as *Quartilla vale* (‘Bye Quartilla’), but this brief form did not prevent numerous writers from expanding upon the greeting to include a salutation where they could name themselves as well. A pair of greetings issued to Ismarus and Crocine (*CIL* 4.5297: *Crocine va(le) | Ismare va(le)*), written just outside the small house at IX.9.f, are illuminated by an additional graffito placed nearby. That message (*CIL* 4.5298: *Ismarus | Crocineni suae | sal(utem)*; ‘Ismarus gives greetings to his Crocine’) identifies Ismarus as someone who wishes Crocine well, and suggests that the two *vale* greetings to Ismarus and Crocine may have been written one to the other.¹⁴

The thirteen messages in room 9 of the House of the Four Styles not only consistently prefer the phrase *vale* (in preference to greetings of *salutem* where the writer too would be named), they also represent the largest group of greetings in Pompeii. No other location in the city contains more than three greetings of *vale*, nor does any other context offer such a large group of graffiti that consists of greetings alone. Indeed, this consistent format is what makes the writing in room 9 so unique. Elsewhere, greetings are interspersed among other types of messages. Here, the desire to wish a friend well is the overriding and single aim.

The names that appear throughout this house merit further consideration. The names Canius, Canesius, Cosmus and Oppius (cat. 4, 13–14, 31–32) appear elsewhere in the house, but no names of men appear in room 9. Instead several female names are inscribed and repeated here, with

Quartilla, Nicopolis and Anthis all receiving multiple messages of greeting, (Anthis and Quartilla receive four greetings, Nicopolis three) while Cypare and Euplia each receive a single mention. The sheer number of greetings and the difference in the spelling of Anthis (twice as Anthis, twice with a misplaced aspiration as Hantis) suggests that multiple people were responsible for inscribing these graffiti. Had a group of men composed these greetings to women, they were conspicuously silent about their own presence. Might the writers of these greetings, then, have been the women themselves?

The consistency of the language used in these inscribed texts would have made this a simple message for someone to write. One needed to know one's letters in order to spell out a name but, beyond that, there was only the short word *vale* to compose, which in most cases here is abbreviated to its common two-letter form, *va(le)*. Should one have needed to, it would even be easy to copy the 'VA' from one of the other messages. A rudimentary or functional literacy was all that was needed.

The physical appearance of this group of graffiti in room 9 offers additional support. All 13 greetings here are written in capital letters, although other Pompeian graffiti are inscribed in cursive script (many quotations of poetry, for example, appear in cursive: Benefiel 2010: fig. 9; Varone 1990). Furthermore, the handwriting of these graffiti suggests that the people who inscribed these messages may not have had practice with writing on a regular basis. The two messages greeting Anthis that appear below the figural painting on the north wall of room 9, for example, are extremely vertical in their appearance (cat. 16, 17), while the name Nicopolis, inscribed to the right, is horizontally spread out with spaces between each letter (cat. 15). These characteristics, the use of capital letters and the uneven spacing in these messages suggest that the hands that formed these letters were capable, but only somewhat accustomed to writing. The writers certainly possessed a level of literacy, but it seems likely that for them writing would not have been an everyday activity.

Finally, the location of the graffiti brings us back to considering these messages as a group. Seven of the graffiti in room 9 appear very low on the wall, within a range of 80 to 93 cm from the floor (cat. 15–19, 21, and 24). Another two appear just around the height of 1 m (cat. 20, 26).¹⁵ The low height at which certain Pompeian graffiti were inscribed has been explained as the work of children. In this case, though, the messages of greetings to a circumscribed number of women would seem to argue against the agency of children (on which see Huntley, this volume). The height of these graffiti in room 9 is indeed lower than most of the graffiti in the rest of the house. These graffiti are also significantly lower than those in the House of Maius Castricius, where the vestibule featured examples at an average of 150 cm from ground level (Benefiel 2010: 89–90). Since a distance of 80 cm above the floor would be an uncomfortable height at which to write if standing up, we might do well to consider other postures. It is possible that, on the occasions that generated these graffiti, room 9 was being used as a dining

room. The height at which the graffiti appear is consistent with the low couches of *triclinia*; while stone and masonry couches were built into many Pompeian gardens, the wooden frames of couches that were used indoors were somewhat lower. The site of Herculaneum has preserved couch frames; at Pompeii, although the frames have often deteriorated, bronze or other decorations applied to them have sometimes been discovered.

Corroborative evidence to confirm this room as a *triclinium* is lacking because this room in particular was the objective of looters who ransacked it in antiquity. Portable materials were carried off, and there was even an attempt to remove one of the central wall-paintings (Gallo 1989: 14–15).¹⁶ That singularity of purpose, when other rooms in the house escaped untouched, suggests that room 9 was an important, sumptuously decorated space.

Penelope Allison has discussed how applying terminology to spaces can mislead us to correlating particular activities to those spaces (Allison 2004). In this house, the division of space does seem to have been rather too strictly applied. Room 9 has been identified as a *tablinum*, a specification that must arise from its location, directly across the atrium and opposite the entrance to the house. Two other rooms opening onto the atrium (rooms 10 and 14) have been labelled as *triclinia*. The portability of ancient furniture meant that rooms could serve many more functions than do the spaces in modern houses. The size and decoration of room 9 are similar to other dining rooms in Pompeian houses. The graffiti here would seem to imply that the room was used for this purpose on at least one occasion.

Altogether the evidence would seem to point to a particular social context that occasioned an outpouring of written greetings. The graffiti, although directed at a number of different recipients, all contain the same, consistent message of positive wishes. They are written in roughly the same size characters and the appearance of each shows a capable but somewhat unsteady hand. Finally, they are all inscribed at roughly the same, and particularly unusual, height on the wall. It is clear that they were written by a number of different people. Several styles of handwriting are present, and the aspiration in the name Anthis causes confusion, resulting in her name being spelled two different ways. But the consistency in the message suggests that these were many different people contributing to the same conversation. All these characteristics suggest that these graffiti came to being as a result of friendly social activity.

The Dialogue between Graffiti and Their Spatial Context

We can continue to analyse the relationship between graffiti and the space in which they appeared by considering additional questions, such as why certain locations contain greater numbers of graffiti, or why graffiti of a particular nature are concentrated in certain types of spaces. In this

house, examination of the relationship of ancient graffiti and contextual space also has the potential to reveal how space was used as well as attitudes toward writing.

The distribution of graffiti in the House of the Four Styles highlights the strong tendency of graffiti to cluster. The graffiti are not scattered indeterminately through the house; rather, dense concentrations are found in rooms 9 and 13, with these two rooms together accounting for more than two-thirds of the graffiti in this house (Figure 2.1). Smaller numbers of graffiti appeared in routes of passage, specifically in the vestibule (room 2) and on the pilasters of the walkway on the west side of the garden. Here, as was the case also in the House of Maius Castricius, concentrations of graffiti are found in the core areas of the house (rooms 9 and 13 are two of the largest rooms in the house and both open onto the atrium); no graffiti are found in the smaller rooms at the margins (rooms 4–8, 12, 14, 15). The second floor of the residence, now lost, was accessed by the stairs in the garden and may have contained additional graffiti.

Many Pompeian houses contain large numbers of graffiti in their peristyles. The House of the Triclinium at V.2.4, for example, contained as many as 23 graffiti on the columns of its relatively modest peristyle. The columns of the peristyle in the House of Triptolemus at VII.7.5 likewise proved an attractive setting for inscribing messages and featured no fewer than 60 graffiti. Larger houses with both atrium and peristyle demonstrate a distinct preference for inscribing graffiti in the peristyle. The House of Paquius Proculus at I.7.1, for example, contained seven graffiti in the atrium but a total of 46 in the peristyle, while the House of the Silver Wedding at V.2.i boasted similar numbers, with 39 graffiti in and around the peristyle and only six in the atrium (see Keegan, this volume page 180; also Langner 2001: 101).¹⁷

The garden in the House of the Four Styles did not attract the same sort of attention. Only a handful of graffiti were inscribed on the pilasters bordering it. The large clusters of graffiti in rooms 9 and 13 suggest that such activity was here instead centred on the atrium. The atrium and surrounding area offered the bulk of living space in this house. Whereas the rear portion of the house contained the garden, kitchen, latrine and a stable, the front portion of the house contained numerous rooms of various sizes distributed around the central atrium.

Rooms 9 and 13 stand apart from the other rooms in the front part of the house for their size and their open nature. The other rooms around the atrium all feature narrow doorways and could be closed off easily. These visual clues of restricted access suggest these were spaces into which one might be invited. Room 13, however, stands open in its full width, offering a space into which foot traffic could flow and one that could receive larger groups of people. It furthermore offers entrance to the rooms on either side of it. These connections and the ability to direct movement into rooms 3 (atrium), 12 and 14 identify this room, according to the

principles of access analysis, as one of the more public spaces of the house (Grahame 1997: 2000).

The layout and location of room 9 emphasise its importance even further. The design of this house does not allow a direct line of sight to traverse the full extent of the interior. Instead, the view from the entrance across the atrium hits the wall separating rooms 9 and 10 (Figure 2.2). The large window in the back wall of room 10 offers a view to the garden, showcasing the natural light and green space within the residence. The deep, recessed space of room 9 was monumentalised with a wide entrance articulated by a low wall and two tall brick pilasters that created oversized interior windows, which allowed significant light from the atrium into the room, and flanked the entrance with imposing architecture adopted from public space.

Within these spaces, additional elements might condition the placement of graffiti. Eleven of the fourteen graffiti in room 9 appear on the northern wall of the room. These cluster near the centre of the room and particularly near the central figural painting, but there appears to be a respect for the text, with each message given its own space without overlapping. The remaining three occupy the eastern wall. None were inscribed on the southern wall. This distribution appears to be unrelated to the decorative scheme of the room, which presented the same central panel of a figural painting flanked by large, yellow panels within the main register on each wall. The relevant element instead appears to be the window. One window stood relatively high in the room's southern wall. Sunlight entered through the *compluvium* of the atrium and filtered into room 9, but the window in that room offered stronger illumination and with its southern orientation provided a direct source of sunlight for most of the day. It may have therefore been easier to see the graffiti, for the purpose of either writing or reading them, on the northern wall where the light would have been best. The bulk of the graffiti in room 13 occur on the northern wall of the room as well. Here too there may have been an issue of visibility. The sunlight entering the *compluvium* shone on this wall for most of the day, but the graffiti here were more visible not only with regard to their position, since they faced out into the atrium, but also in terms of their height on the wall and their size. The drawings in room 13 averaged 7 to 10 cm tall, in contrast to the messages of greeting inscribed in room 9, which stood an average of only 1 cm tall.

The open layout of rooms 9 and 13 provided locations that could host large groups of people but it also meant that someone standing in one of these rooms would have easily been seen by anyone else present in the front section of the house. The fact that graffiti occur in these visible, open spaces and not in smaller, closed-off rooms implies that graffiti were not produced by someone wandering off alone and writing on a wall. Graffiti here and in the House of Maius Castricius occur where people gathered (Benefiel 2010); these locations and the clusters in which graffiti are found suggest

social activity. Graffiti were the result of a desire to write or draw, to add one's own contribution and to join in the conversation.

Dialogues Between Text and Image

The House of the Four Styles also offers a useful setting in which to examine a dialogue between inscribed text and image, and illustrates how modern scholarship has privileged written wall-inscriptions over non-textual examples. Figural graffiti are rarely reproduced in *CIL* 4, the volume devoted to the wall-inscriptions of the Vesuvian area, and then only when there is a clear connection between the content of a textual graffito and an inscribed drawing. The drawing of a male head crowned with a laurel wreath which appears in the atrium of the Villa of the Mysteries, for example, would certainly be less well-known had there not been the simple label written above it, *Rufus est* ('This is Rufus').¹⁸ It is the written label that ensured the drawing was reproduced in *CIL*. In other cases, where there was not an obvious connection between image and text, figural graffiti might be mentioned in a note but generally would not be depicted. Such is the case in the House of the Four Styles, where the one textual graffito on the northern wall of room 13 garners its own entry at *CIL* 4.8215, while the series of figural graffiti appearing on the same wall are mentioned in a note below but are not depicted. Langner's recent work, *Antike Graffitizeichnungen* (2001), therefore offers a giant step forward with its systematic collection of figural graffiti from across the Roman world. This resource provides an excellent overview of what types of images were most common throughout the ancient world and where they were found. Still, the task of integrating figural and textual graffiti remains to be done.

Langner's study reveals that the figural graffiti found in the House of the Four Styles present many of the most popular subjects which are drawn in Pompeii (Langer 2001: 84, fig. 40). These include boats, heads drawn in profile, and circles drawn with a compass (cat. 6–8, 11–12, 34). All three of these motifs were drawn more than once in this house. A galloping horse fills out the complement of graffiti drawings here (cat. 10). While gladiators are another popular subject and are drawn in many other locations in Pompeii, they do not appear among the graffiti in this house.

The arrangement of inscribed texts and images in the House of the Four Styles presents a different picture than that in the House of Maius Castricius (cf. Benefiel 2010: 74–81). Although both houses contain roughly the same ratio of text to image overall, the distribution of these two categories differs markedly. While figural graffiti were scattered throughout the House of Maius Castricius, with no more than a single figural graffito occurring on a wall, the opposite is true in the House of the Four Styles where the graffiti drawings appear almost exclusively in a single location. In both houses, the figural examples appear within a cluster of graffiti rather than as isolated drawings.

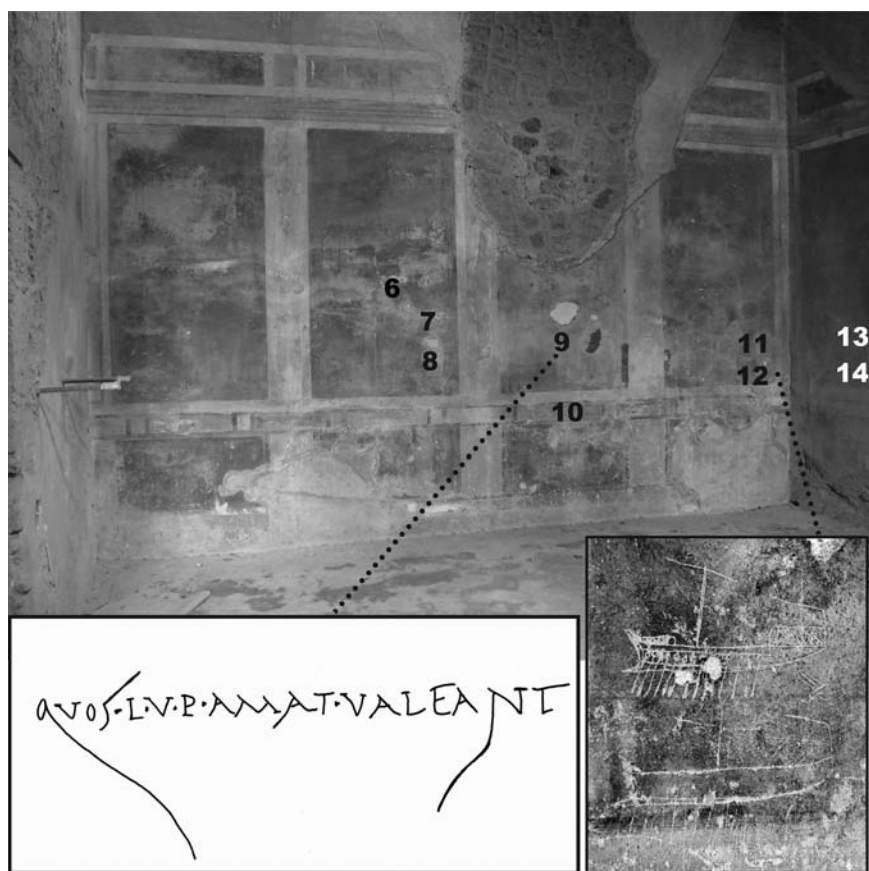


Figure 2.3 Photograph of room 13, with the location of graffiti marked. *Inset:* Detail of boat drawings (cat. 11–12, with line-drawing), and line-drawing of cat. 9. Photo by author by permission of the Soprintendenza speciale per i beni archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.

In the House of the Four Styles, all but one of the figural graffiti appear in the large open room on the northern side of the atrium (room 13). The final figural graffiti, a drawing of a man's head in profile (cat. 34), was detected in the walkway beside the garden but has now disappeared. Room 13 is decorated in the Second Style of Pompeian wall-painting, although the decoration focuses on large blocks of colour and the architectural features are relatively subtle.¹⁹ The socle consists of three zones: a base, large purple blocks alternating with vertical yellow blocks, and a string-course presenting a series of horizontal blocks of alternating colour separated by small squares of light blue. In the main register, the north wall presents four large panels of red background. A bevelled, tall vertical column of colour separates each red panel and is aligned above the vertical yellow block in the

socle. These columns alternate colours too, with blue columns separating the outer from the inner red panels, and yellow at the centre of the wall and at the corners. A painted cornice separates the main zone from the rows of isodomic panels above.

The figural graffiti appear mostly within the main register of the wall decoration and occupy three of the four panels of the northern wall of room 13 (Figure 2.3). The first drawing occurs on the second panel of the north wall, moving from the left. It presents a male head in profile, facing left, with lines extending below to suggest the upper portion of a torso (cat. 6).²⁰ Human heads drawn in profile appear much more frequently among Pompeian graffiti than do portrait busts with shoulders (Langner 2001: nos. 188–626). The head here includes a combination of sketched details that hint at a torso but then develop into geometrical abstractions. Further to the right, but within the same panel, appears a compass-drawn circle decorated with a petal design in its interior (cat. 7). The petal design, added frequently but not always to such circles, was created by moving the point of the compass to the exterior of the circle and rotating from there.²¹ A second compass-drawn circle appears some 20 cm below the first and contains sketchy petal decorations that are less surely traced (cat. 8). The third panel contains a textual graffiti in the main register (cat. 9), and the drawing of a horse (cat. 10), fitted within a yellow horizontal panel in the string-course below. At the right edge of the room, the fourth panel contains two drawings of boats, one above the other (cat. 11–12). These occupy the lower right corner of the red panel.

This pair of boat drawings invites further comment. At Pompeii, one commonly finds two or three boats drawn in the same location, but the popularity of sketching boats of all kinds, from sailboats to shallow skiffs, extended throughout the Mediterranean (Langner 2001: 84, fig. 40). An especially strong interest in boats is apparent in the villa San Marco at Stabiae, where two-thirds of the figural graffiti (11 of 17) depicted some type of boat (Varone 1999). The pair of boats in this house presents the same type of boat, but drawn twice. The boat above is drawn with greater detail, outfitted with oars, a rudder, mast, a clearly drawn prow and even a cabin in the rear (Figure 2.3, inset). The boat drawn below presents the same structure, a similar outline with oars and mast, but includes fewer details and would seem to have been created by a less sure hand. The difference in technique, or ability, is revealed best in the details of the oars. The boat above displays oars that are aligned parallel to each other; each oar extends from a porthole in the body of the ship, and each is designed to convey the details of a thin pole ending in the broader face of the oar. The boat below only achieves thin lines, which are not parallel and contain no further detail to depict oars. The arrangement of this pair of boats resembles the pair of compass-drawn circles on the same wall in that a second image is designed directly below the first; in both cases, it would seem that the second iteration is drawn less confidently. Particularly with the pair of boats, tucked into the lower corner of the panel, both appear to

have been designed at roughly the same time. We might imagine that the lower sketch represents an attempt at reproducing the original image and perhaps learning to draw.

These inscribed drawings in room 13 do not create an extended scene, like the animal hunt incised among the wall decoration in the House of the Criptoportico or the regatta scene in the corridor between the theatres (Langner 2001: 106, fig. 56; 70, fig. 27). In the larger House of Maius Castricius, figural graffiti were scattered throughout the house, with representational graffiti appearing in greater numbers around the central peristyle, while geometrical drawings appeared more frequently in the lower-light environment of the house's lower level (Benefiel 2010: 80–1). Here, by contrast, both geometric and representational graffiti occur together in one large grouping. In both houses, graffiti drawings appear alongside textual messages, but in the House of the Four Styles the arrangement of numerous drawings around a single textual graffito merits further examination.

The inscribed images of this house are concentrated almost exclusively in one room, and roughly in the centre of the group on the north wall appears a single textual graffito (cat. 9). That text is designed to capture people's attention (Figure 2.3, inset). This message is inscribed higher on the wall than the greetings in room 9, appearing somewhat below eye level. It contains letters that are larger than those in room 9 as well, with special flourishes of up to 7 cm. The opening letter of the graffito is given the longest flourish, with a tail of 14.5 cm long that underlines almost the first third of the message. Interpuncts furthermore stand between each word and serifs cap every letter, elements that bestow a formal appearance on the inscribed text. The individual who inscribed this graffito was in no way struggling to form his or her letters. This message was composed in sure, elegant form by someone who was familiar with writing and who knew the conventions of formal, public inscriptions.

The message reads: *quos • L • V • P • amat • valeant* (may those whom LVP loves fare well), and offers an adaptation of a popular epigram that appeared throughout Pompeii. The standard version of that poem began more generally: *quisquis amat valeat* (whoever loves, may he fare well). The epigram circulated widely, and was copied out again and again on the walls of the city, including within the House of Caecilius Iucundus where it was written out as a full elegiac couplet, CIL 4.4091: *quis amat valeat, pereat qui | nescit amare; bis tanto pereat | quisquis amare vetat* (Whoever loves, may he fare well. May he who knows not how to love perish. May he perish twice over, whoever forbids love).²² The poem was so popular, in fact, that it was reproduced in a Pompeian wall-painting that depicted a collection of writing implements. Alongside an inkwell, a set of wax tablets and a stylus, a partially unrolled scroll was inscribed with extremely small text that begins: *quisquis • | ama(t) valia(t) | peria(t) qui n|oscit ama[re] | bis tanti pelriat quisquis amare | vota(t)* (CIL 4.1173; Add. p. 204, 461).²³

Popular epigrams might be personalised by the individual who inscribed them elsewhere in Pompeii, and this seems to be precisely what was done in the House of the Four Styles.²⁴ Who then was this LVP? The initials refer to the *tria nomina* of a male whose *praenomen* was Lucius. Unfortunately the rest of his name cannot be determined. Several family names in Pompeii begin with the letter 'V' including: Valerius, Varius, Vedius, Vesonius, Vettius and Vibius (Castrén 1975: 233–40). Certain Pompeians who are epigraphically attested do have the initials (L)VP, but it is impossible to identify this LVP with any one of them.²⁵

The authority that the message gives to LVP has suggested that he is the homeowner or paterfamilias in this residence. That identification would appear to be confirmed by an amphora in this house also labelled with the initials LVP (Della Corte 1965: 331; *CIL* 4.9469b).

The sentiment of the graffito, which wishes well those whom LVP loves, and the location of the inscribed images on every side of it raise the question, is there a connection between the text and images inscribed on this wall? The graffiti inscribed here are larger and more visible than those elsewhere in this house or than the graffiti in the House of Maius Castricius. The graffiti in room 9, for example, are inscribed roughly at hip level or lower and in smaller letters. Their impact on the decoration and the space is minimal; indeed even when one knows they are there, it still requires a search to find them. The drawing of the head in profile and the compass-drawn circles in room 13, by contrast, are of substantial size and appear roughly at eye level, rendering them more easily visible and rather difficult to ignore. The textual graffito is also higher on the wall and, at more than 30 cm long, more visible, especially with its long flourishes; the overall effect is that special effort went into the presentation of this text.

The location of that graffito, on the back wall of room 13, which is itself fully open to the atrium, means that the inscribed message faces directly onto the atrium and the centre of the home. With the visibility of the message, which could greet anyone who ventured into the atrium, the wish seems intended both for inhabitants and for visitors to the house. That sentiment of welcome may also explain the clustering of graffiti drawings surrounding it. The drawings are found to the right, to the left, and below the inscribed message. Perhaps there was a desire to be close to that positive message and statement of approval, especially if it represented the will of the paterfamilias. In any case, the clustering of figural graffiti here, when only one other example is found in the entire house, would seem to be connected to the textual graffito in the centre of the wall. The number of graffiti here and the wish of welcome taking the form of a wall-inscription itself would seem to make the case that writing and drawing on the wall was not only common in ancient Pompeii, but was an addition to domestic space that did not require an immediate redecoration.

Inscribed Roman Numerals

The House of the Four Styles also contains a third category of graffiti, inscribed Roman numerals, and these numerals can be usefully compared to those found in the Villa San Marco and in the House of Maius Castricius. Antonio Varone was the first to identify three separate classes of graffiti—textual (or alphabetic), figural and numerical—in his publication of the graffiti in the Villa San Marco at Stabiae (Varone 1999). As with figural graffiti, inscribed Roman numerals have almost certainly been under-recorded. Varone's reexamination of the *Casa del Centauro*, for example, yielded three graffiti that the initial publication in *CIL* had neglected; all three consisted of Roman numerals (Varone 1999). In other locations, where the wall plaster has now deteriorated or crumbled away, additional examples have assuredly been lost.

The House of the Four Styles contains fewer examples of inscribed Roman numerals than the other two, larger residences. The range of activities using such numerals is also limited here. In contrast to the House of Maius Castricius (Benefiel 2010: 81-4) and the Villa San Marco (Varone 1999: 354-7), in this house there are no examples of mathematical activity, nor any mix of numbers that may have inspired a game. Two locations in this house, however, do present extensive series of vertical lines. The content and especially the layout of these series suggest that they were created as someone was counting or keeping track of something. The locations of these examples further support this possibility.

The larger of the two series of vertical strokes appears just within the entrance to the house, a location where a servant may have been stationed as a doorkeeper (Figure 2.4). There may have been a number of reasons to keep a running count near the entrance. One simple reason may have been to keep track of the number of visitors, or clients visiting the house. In *CIL*, Della Corte notes that a series of lines was inscribed in charcoal (*ad loc. CIL* 4.8213), an excellent medium for a temporary need since the charcoal could easily be erased. Perhaps additional strokes did once appear here, but any charcoal that was once there is now gone. Yet Della Corte may have been referring to the series of vertical lines that are incised on this wall; the overall number of lines he gives is not far from those that appear on the wall, although the groupings are misrepresented.

A total of 66 lines were inscribed on the northern wall of the vestibule but the strokes are arranged into groupings that may represent units or perhaps facilitated counting (Figure 2.4, inset). The wall itself was decorated with thin painted lines that articulated the wall surface into two main panels. The decoration signalled a change in the space closer to the atrium, with a third section containing vertical panels reminiscent of a pilaster. The graffito spans part of the main section of the wall as well as the vertical section at the end, with several rows of marks on each section. The arrangement is represented on Figure 2.5.

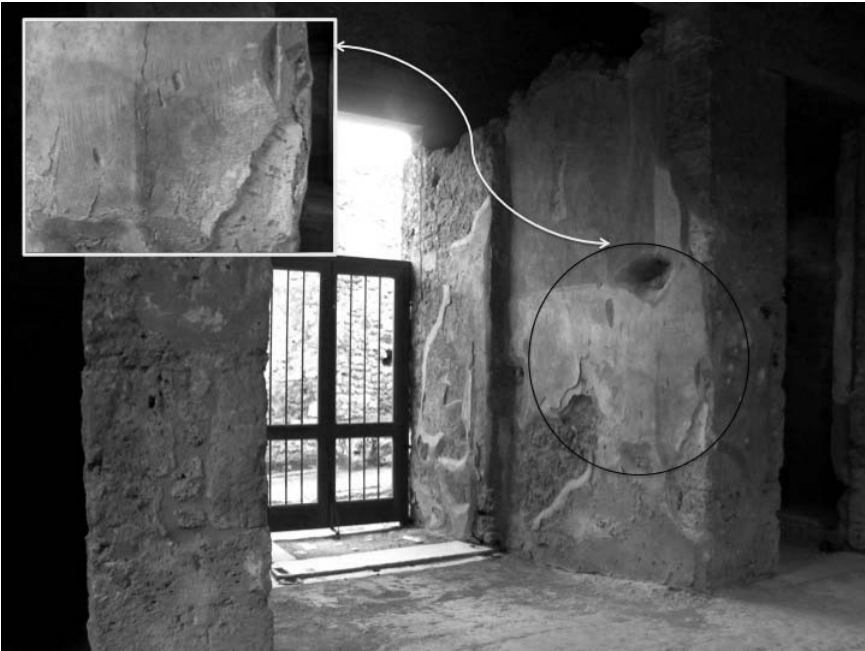


Figure 2.4 Inscribed numerals near the entrance to the House of the Four Styles. Photo by author by permission of the Soprintendenza speciale per i beni archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.

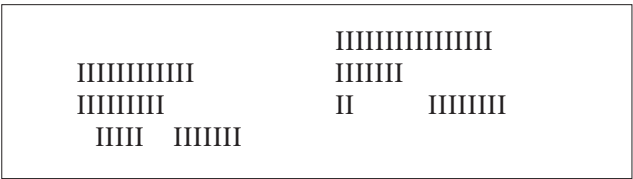


Figure 2.5 The spatial arrangement of the vertical lines on the northern wall of the vestibule.

The entire space occupied by the graffito measures 38 x 55 cm.

A Culture of Graffiti

All in all, even though modest in size, this house shows an active graffiti culture. Large clusters of messages occur in the core areas of the home that were not only central but were large enough to hold groups of people. These relatively spacious areas offered a setting where people might gather and spend time. A few other graffiti appear in the walkway of the rear portion of the house (cat. 29–33), but none were inscribed in the numerous smaller rooms at the margins. As occurs in this house and others across Pompeii,

ancient graffiti are not hidden or tucked away in dark corners. They are not created in the spaces where one might avoid being seen; rather, the majority of examples occur in central spaces of the house where someone inscribing a graffiti would be clearly visible.

The conversations taking place among the graffiti of this house are directed toward both specific recipients and the general reader. The main themes involve hospitality and wishing one well. In addition to the many positive wishes that fill room 9, the message of health and success to those whom a certain LVP favours stands formally front and centre on the north side of the atrium. Two additional graffiti communicated a similar message as one approached the back part of the house, where a specific message of welcome for visitors appeared, wishing, 'Greetings to those who have come here' (cat. 29–30).²⁶

The handful of graffiti in the rear part of the house also included a quotation of literature (cat. 33). Vergil was the most popular poet to be quoted on the walls of Pompeii, and the quotation inscribed here was the most popular fragment of all Latin poetry among Pompeian graffiti. It gives the opening words to book two of Vergil's *Aeneid*: *contiguere omnes* ('they all fell silent'). This phrase occurs precisely as many times as the opening words of the whole poem, *arma virumque cano*, with fourteen distinct examples of each phrase scattered across Pompeii, in both public and private buildings.²⁷ The graffiti in this house was created with charcoal, a format that allowed for easy erasure simply by rubbing or brushing against the wall. (Indeed, this graffiti is no longer extant.) A small percentage of Pompeian graffiti were made with charcoal, although the fragility of the medium suggests that additional examples may have been lost; few of the charcoal inscriptions documented in *CIL* are preserved today. A study of the wall-inscriptions inscribed in charcoal might reveal whether or not this medium was chosen for its impermanent nature, or if it was simply an alternative to incising a graffiti into the wall plaster. The three other graffiti in the back portion of the house consisted of two male names and one additional drawing (cat. 31–32, 34).

A significant number of figural graffiti also appear in this house. The clustering of drawings on the north wall of room 9 and especially around the message *Quos LVP amat valeant* may suggest an attitude of permission. These figural examples display popular subjects for graffiti drawings and present images created by those skilled and less skilled at drawing.

This house also contains graffiti that appear to serve a practical purpose. The series of vertical marks at and near the entrance of the house would seem to represent a running count or an attempt to keep track of numbers or units of something. The number of such marks points to much counting, but these series are concentrated only here, near the entrance of the house, implying that this was the appropriate place for this activity and for the inscribing associated with it. Indeed the graffiti in the vestibule consist

primarily of these marks indicating counting, in contrast to graffiti of more varied content in the vestibules of other houses at Pompeii.

Furthermore, in contrast to larger Pompeian houses such as the House of Maius Castricius, where the vestibule contains a dense concentration of graffiti (including names, drawings, a quotation of poetry, and greeting to the emperor), the vestibule in the House of the Four Styles contains relatively few (cat. 1–3).²⁸ This difference in number may be explained by the varying form and function of the two spaces. At the House of Maius Castricius, an immense, four-storey residence with a double peristyle and a private bath complex, the entranceway offered a spacious area equivalent in size to the smaller rooms surrounding the main peristyle. The remains of doorposts show that the space could be closed off either at the road or at its interior edge where the vestibule opened onto the peristyle. This area, therefore, may have held clients or visitors who waited here before being admitted to the house. At the House of Four Styles, however, the entranceway was recessed from the street only slightly and could not offer a comfortable space for visitors to wait before being received. The graffiti in the vestibule do point to the presence of a doorkeeper or *ianitor* at the entrance to the House of the Four Styles but, in contrast to those at the House of Maius Castricius, they do not imply the work of numerous different individuals.

The three main spaces for graffiti in this house (rooms 9, 13 and 17) each illustrate a distinct distribution pattern. The walkway along the garden in the back of the house (room 17) featured six graffiti spread out among its pilasters. The smaller number of graffiti in this area may be linked with the use of the space and the fact that fewer people spent time here. The architectural and archaeological evidence, featuring a kitchen, stall and livestock in residence, confirm that in its final form this area was not a place for gathering or entertaining guests.

Room 13 by contrast presents a large, open area, directly on the atrium, and could have easily held gatherings of inhabitants or visitors. The graffiti found here are almost all concentrated on the north wall, where they were most visible (Figure 2.3). Numerous figural graffiti cluster around an inscribed message that wishes well the friends and family of a certain individual with the initials LVP, perhaps the homeowner. The graffiti drawings here present many of the most popular subjects for figural graffiti. The repeated images of the compass-drawn circle and the boat, in both cases with one image appearing above the second, are notable for the steady hand that created the top image while a significantly less sure hand repeated roughly the image below. Since so many drawings appear here and one is clearly visible from nearly anywhere else in the house when standing in this space, it appears that this was an appropriate place to draw.

In room 9, the largest and most sumptuously decorated space opening onto the atrium, 13 graffiti convey greetings to a group of women. The greetings are written in a number of different hands and on two walls of the room but all appear at roughly the same height. The handwriting suggests

that the writers may not have been exceedingly experienced with writing; the height of the messages, slightly lower than 1 m from the ground, implies that they were not standing but possibly reclining. The repetition of names in several of the messages and the consistency of the message that all the graffiti convey suggest a continuing conversation, promoted and encouraged by social engagement.

The House of the Four Styles thus demonstrates a strong interest in the creation of graffiti, a phenomenon that was popular throughout the city of Pompeii. Wall-inscriptions are not scattered throughout the house but are concentrated in areas where people would have gathered and which would have hosted social activity. Even the act of drawing on the wall appears not to have been a solitary interest but one connected with others. The messages of greeting in room 9 do not negatively impact the decoration of the room because they are so small that one would have to be standing within a few feet of the wall to even notice that they were there. They do point to an energetic dialogue of active and interested participation. Greetings and welcome messages are indeed the main texts among the wall-inscriptions in the House of the Four Styles. This house thus hints at certain ancient attitudes toward graffiti. Writing on the wall might be used for practical purposes (keeping track at the entrance), or didactic (learning to draw), or might come about as the result of social activity (ebullient greetings in room 9). Graffiti are found on the walls of the majority of homes in Pompeii, offering a flexible and accepted means of communication.

NOTES

- * My thanks go to Jennifer Baird and Claire Taylor for organising an outstanding conference that inspired this volume and for their keen editorial abilities. Many thanks also to Soprintendente Pietro Giovanni Guzzo for permission to study this house, and to Jacqueline DiBiasie for her assistance in photographing and documenting the graffiti here.
- 1. It is important to remember that the movement termed 'graffiti art' is itself a relatively recent phenomenon and should therefore not be taken as a cultural constant.
- 2. *CIL* distinguishes between wall-inscriptions that have been painted (*tituli picti*) and those that have been incised (*graphio scripta*). A smaller number of wall-inscriptions were written in charcoal and are grouped with the incised inscriptions (in the section *graphio scripta*). The painted wall-inscriptions were created by teams of *scriptores* whose job it was to post these notices of public interest. They are painted in large letters, high on the wall for maximum visibility, and feature a standard palaeography (cf. Franklin 1978; Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980: 28). Incised wall-inscriptions, on the other hand, could be created by any individual on the street with a sharp tool in hand and a desire to express themselves. For more on the documentation of Pompeian wall-inscriptions in *CIL* 4, see Mouritsen 1988, and Franklin 2001: 3–8.
- 3. These messages were generally scratched into the plaster that covered wall surfaces. Other archaeological sites are rarely as well preserved as Pompeii, especially in terms of wall plaster, so there is little comparable evidence from

elsewhere in the ancient world (but see Baird on Dura-Europos, this volume). The *Domus Musae* in Assisi, the *Casa delle Fontane* in Brescia, and the *Casa Bellezza* on the Aventine in Rome, however, have each yielded a handful of graffiti, similarly inscribed in the interior of the house (cf. Guarducci 1986; Gregori and Massaro 2005; Boldrighini 2003). It is therefore likely that the popularity of writing on the walls that is seen at Pompeii extended elsewhere in the Roman world as well (see further the comments in the introduction to this volume, page 3).

4. The study on the wall-inscriptions within the houses and buildings of insula I.10 is being conducted by Antonio Varone and Henrik Mouritsen and will appear in the series on the Insula of the Menander, edited by Roger Ling. This monograph will certainly further raise our awareness of residential buildings as inscribed space.
5. For a brief summary of the history of the excavations see Gallo 1989: 3–6. The entire city-block of I.8 was furthermore the subject of a socio-economic analysis by Castiglione Morelli del Franco and Vitale (1989). Strictly on the basis of its dimensions, this house might be considered as falling within the range of the upper-middle class.
6. The floorplan is based on that of *Pompeii: Pitture e Mosaici (PPM)*. Gallo (1989) has a different numbering system for the rooms of this house.
7. This garden is variously labelled. In his typological study of Pompeian residences, Fabrizio Pesando (1997) classified I.8.17, 11 among the houses ‘with atrium and hortus’. Gallo termed the garden a *xystus* (1989: 24–5). *PPM* calls it a *viridario*.
8. Two other graffiti are recorded outside the entrance at I.8.17 (*CIL* 4.8211 and 9268).
9. *CIL* 4.1839 (which notes that the second line was written in another hand): *Agat(h)o Herrenni serv(u)s rogat Venere(m) | ut periat rogo*. A fragmentary third line contained the word *vita*.
10. Aside from Langner’s classifications (as represented in Table 9.2, page 169), one can obtain a sense of how numerous such greetings were on the walls of Pompeii by surveying the index of *CIL* 4 for attestations of *salutem* and *vale*. However, the index is not comprehensive as it only covers the wall-inscriptions published until 1909 (an index was not issued for the fascicles published later in the twentieth century).
11. Cf. however Elizabeth Meyer’s recent article on portraits of women holding writing implements in Pompeian wall-painting (Meyer 2009). Sarah Levin-Richardson has analysed gender dynamics among the graffiti of the purpose-built brothel in Pompeii (Levin-Richardson, forthcoming). The topic of literacy in general has powered several collections of essays over the past two decades, continuing the discussion begun in 1989 by William Harris’ groundbreaking *Ancient Literacy* and now followed by Humphrey 1991 (containing the particularly relevant article by James Franklin on literacy and the wall-inscriptions at Pompeii), Bowman and Woolf 1994, Watson 2001, Cooley 2002, Mackay 2008, Lomas, Whitehouse and Wilkins 2007 and Johnson and Parker 2009. See also the studies of Thomas 1992 and Small 1997.
12. One proposed name for the house was even *Domus di LVP et Quartilla* (Eschebach 1993: 47). Castiglione Morelli del Franco and Vitale (1989: 208) name Quartilla as an inhabitant of the house without any mention of the other women, while Gallo repeated Della Corte’s suggestion about the distinction in status between Quartilla and the others (1989: 79).
13. The complexity of identifying and examining the presence of women in the Roman world, even in domestic spaces, has been ably discussed by Saller 2003 and Allison 2007.

14. Other graffiti combine both wishes of *salutem* and *vale* into one message. Cf. *CIL* 4.4596, 6894, 7382, 8175, 8291, 9153 and 9202.
15. Only two graffiti in this room were inscribed higher: cat. 27 and 28 appear at 136 cm and 137 cm from ground level, respectively. The remaining three graffiti in the room have disappeared (cat. 22, 23, 25) but were situated among graffiti that remain visible and probably were inscribed at the same height as those messages around them.
16. For a list of the artefacts that were discovered in this house during the excavations, see Castiglione Morelli del Franco and Vitale 1989.
17. House of the Triclinium (*CIL* 4.4099–4121); House of Triptolemus (*CIL* 4.4713–4785); House of Paquius Proculus (*CIL* 4.8067–8135); House of the Silver Wedding (*CIL* 4.4152–4220).
18. *CIL* 4.9226. Rufus appears in a number of publications, from Jashemski and Meyer's *The Natural History of Pompeii* (2002: 120), for the laurel wreath he wears, to Berry's *The Complete Pompeii* (2007: 102), where he offers a prime illustration of Pompeian graffiti. He is presented as a caricature by Beard (2008: 115–16) and Funari (1993). This graffito even provides the cover illustration for Weeber's *Le Campagne Elettorali nell'antica Roma* (2007).
19. There is no projecting of a stage or other support, and the columns that separate panels in the main register are simple colour rather than articulated. The other two rooms in the Second Style, rooms 4 and 12, are decorated similarly (Gallo 1989: 33–8).
20. Illustrations of these graffiti are reproduced in Gallo 1989: pl. XXXIII–XXXV.
21. For additional examples of the variety of decoration that could be added to such circles, see Langner 2001, nos. 34–146. These seem to have been a popular design to create across the ancient world and even into the Middle Ages (cf. Rodríguez 2009).
22. The elegiac couplet would be perfect, were it not for the missing *quis* in the opening word (which should be *quisquis*). The layout of the graffito may also suggest that the writer was not metrically sensitive, since the text is written out in three lines instead of arranged as an elegiac couplet in two. For the popularity of this verse see Gigante 1979: 210–11; Varone 2002: 62–3; Milnor 2009: 301–2. The phrase *quisquis amat valeat* was also adapted to wish precisely the opposite message, *quisquis amat pereat* ('may he who loves perish'); for repetitions and variations on it, see *CIL* 4.1824, 3199, 3200d, 4200, 4659, 4663, 5186, 5272, 6782, 8215, 9130. This opening phrase was also used in the House of Maius Castricius as a concluding flourish, following a complete elegiac couplet about kisses; cf. Giordano 1966, no. 46 (= Benefiel 2010, cat. # 43).
23. The limited space available on the unrolled portion of the scroll means that several words must be completed on the following line. For an illustration of this wall-painting, see Panetta 2004: 159. Pompeian wall-paintings that depict writing material are often inscribed with actual text, even though the letters are so small as to be virtually illegible. The House of the Menander, for example, is so named because of the wall-painting in the peristyle that depicts a man sitting and holding a papyrus on which is written the name Menander and a reference to his comedies (*CIL* 4.7350).
24. A repeated poem about a gemstone, for example, is prefaced in one location with 'Greetings to Primigenia' (*CIL* 4.10241); another popular epigram at Pompeii that begins 'we came here desiring' was inscribed and then signed by the person who wrote it, concluding with: *scribit Cornelius Martialis* (*CIL* 4.8891).

25. Lucius Valerius Primus (*CIL* 4.9962), Varius Priscus (*CIL* 4.4258), Vedius Primigenius (*CIL* 4.2413a), Vesonius Primus (*CIL* 4.3471, 3477) and Vettius Proc(u)lus (*CIL* 4.2098).
26. The sentiment is written more than once, although the first version is halted. *CIL* 4.8220a: *Saluti ven | ven | III*; 8220b: *Saluti venientis*. The 'I' of *saluti* presented in *CIL* could easily be the first stroke of an 'E' for *salute(m)*. The '-is' ending of the final word *venientis* may suggest the participle was being declined in the second declension instead of the third (*venientibus*). Without the final '-s', the message would make sense as *salute(m) venienti* (cf. Plaut. *Epid.* 571: *venienti des salutem atque osculam*).
27. Verg. *Aen.* 1.1 is written out in full at *CIL* 4.4832: [A]rma • virumque cano Troia(e) qui primus ab oris. Briefer quotations include: *CIL* 4.1282, 2361, 3198, 4757, 5002, 5337, 7108 (villa in Boscoreale), 7131, 8320e-f, 8416, 8831, 10059 and 10086a. Graffiti quoting the beginning of book 2 include *CIL* 4.1672, 2213, 3151, 3889, 4036, 4191, 4212, 4665, 4675, 4877, 6707, 8222, 8247 and 10096b. Other graffiti similarly make reference to a longer version by quoting the opening words. Cooley and Cooley provide a full list of Pompeian graffiti offering quotations of ancient literature in their Appendix 2 (Cooley and Cooley 2004: 220–1). For more on Vergilian quotations among Pompeii's graffiti, see Gigante 1979: 163–83; Milnor 2009; and for another view Beard 2008: 182–4.
28. The large House of Paquius Proculus at I.7.1 similarly features a high number of graffiti in its vestibule.
29. The letter 'L' measures 3.5 cm.
30. The letter 'C' measures 12 cm.
31. The head itself measures 7.5 cm, while the extension of the line that creates a possible bust puts the height of the whole image at 12 cm.
32. Several letters feature long strokes. The initial 'Q' has a tail of 14 cm; the 'S' of *quos* measures 3.5 cm; and the 'N' of *valeant* presents a downstroke of 7.5 cm.
33. This and the following entry represent an adapted reading from that of *CIL* IV.8216: EENESI VA EENESI
34. The letters A, L and E of *vale* are in nexus. (*CIL* lists 8218a as *Nicopolis va* and 8218d as *Nicopolis vale*, but the two are in fact switched.)
35. The letters of *Nicopolis* stand 1 cm high, while *va(le)* measures 2 cm.
36. The V and A are in nexus.
37. The V and A are in nexus.
38. The tail of the 'Q' is 4 cm long.
39. The 'C' of Cypare was not recorded by Della Corte but is visible.
40. The letters of VA stand at 1.5 cm high.
41. The widths of this and the following graffiti were recorded in *CIL*. The graffiti themselves have disappeared.

Table 2.1 Appendix to Chapter 2. Graffiti in the House of the Four Styles (*Casa dei Quattro Stili*, I.8.17, 11)

Cat. #	Reference (CIL IV)	TEXT / Image	Location	Height of letters/ image (cm)	Width of letters/image (cm)	Height from floor (cm)
1	8212a	QUARTILA VALE	Room 2 (fauces), N wall	Lost	Lost	Lost
2	8212b	QUARTILA	Room 2 (fauces), N wall; near atrium	1.3—1.5 ²⁹	9	109.5
3	8213	IIIIIIIIII (12) IIIII (7) IIIIIIII (9) II IIIII (8) IIII IIIII (5, 7)	Room 2 (fauces), N wall	38	55	135
4	8217	CANIV	Room 3 (atrium), NW corner; R of entrance to room 15	3.5—4.0 ³⁰	10.5	168
5	8214	IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII (21) IIIIIIIIII (13)	Room 3 (atrium), NW corner; L of entrance to room 14	5	49	156
6	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIII, no. 56; Langner 2001, no. [4917]	Face of a man	Room 13, N wall; 2nd panel from left, main register	7.5 ³¹	7.5	154
7	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIII, no. 56; Langner 2001, no. 133; PPM 1.875, n. 48	Compass-drawn circle, with flower petal design	Room 13, N wall; Right of #6, right edge of 2nd panel	10.5	10.5	137
8	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIII, no. 56; Langner 2001, no. 66; PPM 1.875, n. 48	Compass-drawn circle	Room 13, N wall; Below #7	10	10	114
9	8215; illustrated at PPM 1.875, n. 50	QVOS • L • v • p • AMAT • VALEANT	Room 13, N wall; 3rd panel of main register	ca 1.5—2.0 ³²	32.5	114

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Cat. #	Reference (CIL IV)	TEXT / Image	Location	Height of letters/ image (cm)	Width of letters/image (cm)	Height from floor (cm)
10	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIV, no. 58; Langner 2001, no. [1432]	<i>Horse, galloping to the left</i>	Room 13, N wall; Within yellow panel of string course above socle; below #9	6.5	9	74.5
11	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIV, no. 57; Langner 2001, no. 1900; PPM 1.875, n. 49	<i>Boat with oars, mast, and rudder</i>	Room 13, N wall; 4th panel of main register, lower right corner	6.5	10.5	99
12	Gallo 1989, tav. XXXIV, no. 57; Langner 2001, no. 1901; PPM 1.875, n. 49	<i>Boat with oars</i>	Room 13, N wall; Below #11	7	11	92
13	8216 ³³	CANESI VA	Room 13, E wall; 1st red panel (from left) of main register, lower right corner	ca. 4	23	132
14	8216	CANESI VA	Room 13, E wall; Below #13	ca. 6	29	111
15	8218a	NICOPOLIS • VALE ³⁴	Room 9, N wall; Central panel (2nd from left), main register; black background, at the left edge of the rectan- gular block below the figural painting	1 ³⁵	14	91
16	8218b	ANTHIS • VA	Room 9, N wall; Right of #15	2--2.5	7.5	92
17	8218c	ANTHIS • VA	Room 9, N wall; Right of #16	2	8	93

18	8218 <i>d</i>	NICOPOLIS • VA	Room 9, N wall; Right of #17	0.6	7.5	92.5
19	8218 <i>e</i>	NICOPOLIS VA ³⁶	Room 9, N wall; Below #18	1	15	82
20	8218 <i>f</i>	HANTIS VA ³⁷	Room 9, N wall; 3rd panel from left (yellow background), main register	Only traces preserved	Traces preserved	104.5
21	8218 <i>g</i>	HANTIS	Room 9, N wall; Below #20	1.5–3.5	5	85
22	8218 <i>h</i>	[EU]PLIA	Room 9, N wall; 3rd panel from left (yellow background), main register	Lost	Lost	Lost
23	8218 <i>i</i>	PLATACO TVRVDA	Room 9, N wall; 3rd panel from left (yellow background), main register	Lost	Lost	Lost
24	8218 <i>k</i>	VA QVARTILLA	Room 9, N wall; 3rd panel from left (yellow background), right edge of panel and extending into black border; 5.8 cm from bottom of main register	0.8 ³⁸	10.7	80
25	8218 <i>l</i>	QVARTILA VA	Room 9, N wall; 3rd panel	Lost	Lost	Lost
26	8219 <i>a</i>	CYPARE • VA ³⁹	Room 9, E wall; Yellow panel, L of center central panel	0.9 ⁴⁰	7	107
27	8219 <i>b</i>	QVARTILLA VA	Room 9, E wall; Yellow panel, L of center panel	ca. 1	13	136

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Cat. #	Reference (CIL IV)	TEXT / Image	Location	Height of letters/ image (cm)	Width of letters/image (cm)	Height from floor (cm)
28	8219c	QVARTILL[-]A	Room 9, E wall; Yellow panel, R of central panel	ca. 1	10	137
29	8220a	SALVTI VEN / VEN / III	Room 17 (garden); S pilaster	Lost	7.5 ⁴¹	Lost
30	8220b	SALVTI VENIENTIS	Room 17 (garden); S pilaster	Lost	11.5	Lost
31	8221a	COSMVS	Room 17 (garden); 2nd pilas- ter from S	Lost	15	Lost
32	8221b	OPPI	Room 17 (garden); 3rd pilas- ter from S	Lost	26	Lost
33	8222	CON[TI]QVERE OMN	Room 17 (garden); N wall	Lost	41	Lost
34	8222 (note)	<i>Bust of a man, facing left</i>	Room 17 (garden); N wall	12 (CIL)	Lost	Lost

3 The Graffiti of Dura-Europos

A Contextual Approach

J. A. Baird

The archaeological quest for the written word was paradigmatic in early Classical archaeology. This was no less true at Dura-Europos than any other site, and the search for parchments and papyri was one of the main objectives of the expedition conducted in the 1920s and 1930s by a joint team from Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Under the direction of Mikhail Rostovtzeff, then at Yale as Sterling Professor of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology, inscriptions and other writing from the site were highly prized by the excavators.

Rostovtzeff's account of the excavations at Dura, based on lectures presented in 1937 at University College, remains the only synthetic treatment of the site (Rostovtzeff 1938, although see also Hopkins 1979 on the excavations and Perkins 1973 on the art). Reproduced on the page facing the preface in Rostovtzeff's account was a Greek inscription, translated there as 'I pray to (or I thank) the Fortune of Dura'. Beneath this followed the caption 'one of the inscriptions on the main gate of Dura. The first inscription discovered at Dura by the Yale expedition' (Rostovtzeff 1938: vi). Rostovtzeff thus had the *Tychē* of Dura open his book and bless the Yale expedition. It is unclear whether this text was actually among the first to be discovered (which seems unlikely) or whether this was contemporary mythologising,¹ but what is interesting is that this text was described, in this instance, as an inscription. The text in question was inscribed into the stone of the main gate of Dura, scratched into the limestone surface with a sharp implement rather than a chisel—it was the type of text the expedition usually classified as 'graffiti'. The text is among hundreds, mostly written in Greek but also occurring in Latin, Palmyrene and Safaitic, inscribed into the stone surface of the interior of the city's western gate. Indeed, at Dura, hundreds of texts and images were inscribed, hammered and painted onto the surfaces of walls, be they houses, public buildings, sanctuaries or fortifications. Despite the rich resource that these markings represent, their interpretation has languished. When is an informal text, in an inconspicuous corner, an 'inscription' and when a 'graffito'? How can we define 'informal' against 'formal' markings? What does the placement of a text or image in a particular place mean?

The ancient texts excavated at Dura included the parchments and papyri, the inscriptions and the graffiti. Only the parchments and papyri were systematically published by the expedition (Kilpatrick 1964; Welles et al. 1959); the inscriptions and graffiti were released in the preliminary reports, some were published again with selective additions and translations in a volume of *Yale Classical Studies* (Frye et al. 1955), and some of the textual inscriptions and graffiti published again subsequently in *SEG*, *AE* and *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*. Further graffiti and inscriptions on ceramic fragments were separately treated by du Mesnil du Buisson (Buisson 1959); those found in the earlier excavations of Cumont at Dura had been catalogued separately (Cumont 1926). The pictorial graffiti of Dura were published as a group much later, but these were often given erroneous contexts, and were separated from accompanying textual graffiti (Goldman 1999).²

At Dura the term ‘graffiti’ was used by the excavators to classify some of the material, but the definition was fluid and not always limited to ‘scratched’ texts. Generally, graffiti were seen as a type of inscription, although sometimes they were separately catalogued and studied; dipinti were included as a sub-type of graffiti. The ‘graffiti’ from Dura examined here, rather than attempting to define graffiti *a priori*, takes as a starting point *all* of those texts and images scratched or painted on architectural surfaces and objects within the city that were not ‘official’ in the sense of being for example formal lapidary inscriptions, such as dedications of statues, buildings or altars. All scratched and painted markings on objects are also included, leaving out only stamps made into clay before firing (see introduction to this volume, page 4). Painted texts and images are included, except for those that are part of overall schemes (e.g. labels on large painted mural sanctuaries are not included here, but later painted dipinti and graffiti added to these murals are). By starting from a perspective of inclusiveness, I want to be able to problematise the taxonomies currently used to study texts and images, drawing meanings from them without first restricting those meanings in particular categories. As will be shown, there is no sharp boundary between the content of scratched versus painted texts, as is found (e.g.) at Pompeii. Finally, we can see, at Dura, how graffiti might be a means by which we can trace different communities, and their movements, throughout the town.

This chapter will use the case study of Dura to examine how context can inform the meaning of these graffiti, and vice versa. The linguistic and cultural diversity of Dura, a Hellenistic foundation held by the Parthians and then the Romans, makes it an interesting example. By the third century CE a Roman garrison was stationed within the city walls, and the interactions of the different communities within the site are one aspect which graffiti stand to elucidate. Similarly, the site is an interesting place to question our definitions of ancient graffiti. Is ‘graffiti’ a meaningful label for texts found on the walls inside houses? Can the languages of graffiti be used to create

a linguistic map of the town? What behaviours are associated with the creation of graffiti, and how can we integrate such texts into synthetic studies? These questions will be addressed by situating the pictorial and textual graffiti of Dura in their architectural, urban and historical context.

MAKING AND MATERIALISING GRAFFITI

There has been no systematic approach to the recording or collecting of graffiti at Dura. Most seem to have been left *in situ* and were recorded by tracing or rubbing, and were sometimes also photographed. Some plaster was sawn out of the standing walls, and, with some of the fallen fragments, returned to Yale and Damascus with the *partage*.³ Depending on the excavation staff each year in the field, transcriptions and translations of texts were made, and some studies made of particular groups (Jotham Johnson, for instance, collated and studied the graffiti of the Palmyrene gate, which was published by Baur and Rostovtzeff 1931: 114–19, pl. XVI and XVII). Many graffiti were published, but not all of these were illustrated, and some are known only from prose descriptions in the publications and in the excavation notebooks. In publications, classifications were unsystematic, with graffiti sometimes being enumerated as inscriptions, sometimes as a separate class of texts from inscriptions and sometimes as a subclass of inscriptions. In short, the excavation, conservation, publication and interpretation of graffiti at Dura exemplifies the study of graffiti across the Mediterranean as a whole; it was haphazard, with a tendency to place primacy on the status of graffiti as texts, rather than parts of structures, or objects, or landscapes.

The architecture of Dura consists of several materials, including stone—generally, a local gypsum—as well as mudbrick, plaster and wood (particularly in roof construction). The city wall and towers, and the citadel fortification, as well as the citadel and redoubt palaces, were built in cut-stone, generally thought to be characteristic of Dura's Hellenistic period to which all of these structures are dated (Leriche 2004). Other buildings, including houses and sanctuaries, were usually built of a mudbrick superstructure on a rubble base, which were then plastered. Plastered surfaces were everywhere in Dura, on both internal and external walls.⁴ Texts and images were painted, inscribed (or, indeed, painted *and* inscribed) and hammered into both stone and plaster surfaces, and these comprise a diverse group not only in their method or technique of making but also the composition, date, purpose and context.

Graffiti, at Dura as at other sites, do not form a homogeneous category, but it might be the best term that we have for discussing as a group all of the texts and images which have not been subsumed under nor published with more 'official' inscriptions, dedicatory or otherwise (on the definition of graffiti as being 'unofficial', see Chaniotis page 199). The graffiti

at Dura, as elsewhere, were categorised and studied separately because of their perceived value relative to 'proper' texts, either on parchment or papyrus, or lapidary inscriptions.

In terms of the practice of making graffiti, we might also consider 'writing culture' in the town more generally. The problem of classification also haunts the objects with writing on them at the site. For instance, altars with inscribed decoration which were seen as being 'not of a professional sculptor' were designated as graffiti, even though they were planned, intentional, formal and made by 'some worshiper' (Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929: 68). In some instances, then, 'graffiti' was simply a qualitative judgment by the excavators of how nicely inscriptions were thought to have been done: those that looked of lower quality were graffiti, those of higher quality and hence perceived as professional were inscriptions. While the lines between graffiti and inscriptions generally are blurry, in such cases the distinction is neither productive nor appropriate. Similarly, stamps on ceramics were counted as graffiti by excavators (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 115, no. 642) but they are not in this paper.⁵ Other markings on vessels included names, dates, references to contents and measures (whereas stamps are decorative, or potters marks: Frye et al. 1955: 200–1). A number of objects, particularly items of personal adornment, were also inscribed. Few of these could be argued to be graffiti, as the text was integral to the design, fabrication, and use of the items.⁶

Dura is exceptional as a Roman-period site only in its preservation and the extent of excavation. It is a fairly ordinary town in the Roman Near East, and in this context we might be surprised by the density and extent of writing culture. Graffiti, both textual and pictorial, permeate every part of the town, in public and private contexts, in sanctuaries, shops, houses and fortifications. Other evidence for writing at Dura, beyond the parchments, papyri and lapidary inscriptions, include the archives building in the agora known as the *Chreophylakeion* (Leriche 1996), and the material culture associated with writing includes a number of *styli* (bone, wood, and copper alloy examples survive), waxed wooden tablets⁷ and inkwells; related are the seal boxes, sealings and seal rings.⁸ These items were found throughout the site; *styli*, for instance, were found not only in the large houses of the elite but in a number of wider domestic and public contexts. So, while we might not be able to ascertain the degree of literacy at Dura, we can observe the practice of writing as something that happened all over the city, and this might be taken as indicative of an ability to write, and to read what has been written, which was not restricted to a particular part of the population.

Graffiti are valuable for illuminating aspects of life different from that seen in the parchments and papyri (Frye et al. 1955; Welles et al. 1959). For example they give us a picture of the linguistic diversity of the town. Greek, Latin, Palmyrene, Hatrean and Safaitic were all found in the graffiti (on the Hatrean, Bertolino 1997; Leriche and Bertolino 1997). Just over 1,200 of almost 1,400 recorded graffiti at Dura were textual; of these, 89 per cent were Greek. Latin graffiti comprise only 3 per cent, and those in Semitic

languages 5 per cent; the remainder are made up of bilingual Greek and Latin or Greek and Semitic texts (Figure 3.1). The preponderance of Greek graffiti at Dura is perhaps unsurprising in a town which had originated as a Greek colony. Most graffiti remain undated, and while the bulk seem to belong to the second and third centuries CE, some are certainly earlier and so this is not a 'snapshot' of the town's linguistic profile in any particular period.⁹

Graffiti at Dura were not just linguistically but stylistically diverse. While most of the graffiti of Dura were scratched into stone and plaster surfaces, other texts and images were painted, usually in red or black, onto plaster

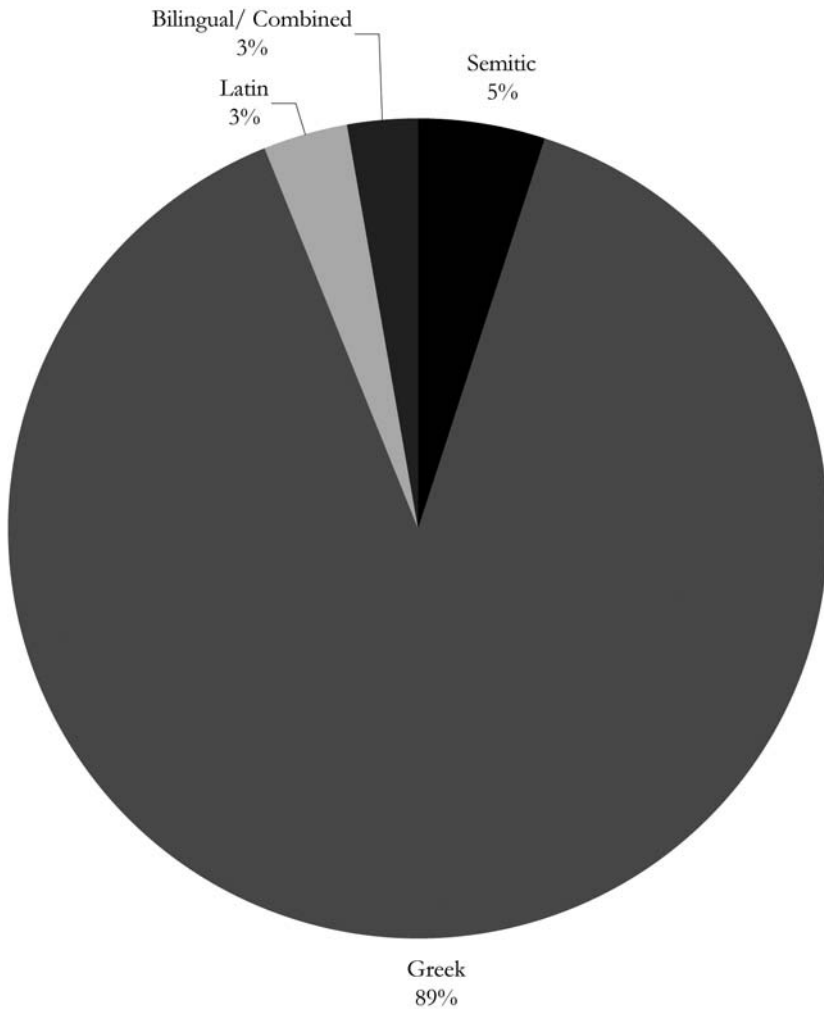


Figure 3.1 The relative proportion of languages in the textual graffiti of Dura-Europos.

(so, conventionally called *dipinti*). Still other texts and images were ‘hammered’ (as described in the reports), or more accurately, ‘pecked’ into some surfaces. These ‘hammered’ images remain visible on the stone fortifications, particularly within the south tower of the citadel on the eastern side of the site.¹⁰ Unlike the scratched and painted forms of graffiti, which generally use outlines to generate their figures, the hammered graffiti engraved recessed figures into stone, like silhouettes. While these were worked into stone, their engraving was not done with a fine chisel as the dedicatory inscriptions; they are made up of many tiny percussive marks made shallowly into the gypsum blocks of the fortifications—indeed, they are so shallow that today they are only visible in a certain slant of light. Different techniques were also used to make graffiti of different sizes; scratched letters are generally 3 to 5 cm high, whereas hammered letters tend to be twice as tall, with the tools being used to make them not conducive to producing small text, but suited to larger texts visible from greater distances.

While the plaster on the houses and other buildings was renewed regularly, allowing us to observe some temporal relationships (even if these are only relative, as for instance the graffiti found on the layers of plaster beneath the painted murals in the synagogue, or the *dipinti* found over them: Kraeling 1956: 320; Grenet 1988), there is very little to date the hammered graffiti. Graffiti inside the houses, for instance, can often be said with relative certainty to belong to the final period of the town, in the mid-third century, while the hammered images on the stone fortifications can generally only be dated by the fortifications themselves, which were built in the Hellenistic period, subsequent to the founding of Europos, as the Hellenistic town was known. The surviving recorded graffiti written on plaster largely belong to the final period of the city, during which it was under Roman control, when a Roman military garrison had installed itself inside the city walls, occupying much of the northern side of the town (James 2004, 2007).

Graffiti can be utilised in examining activities which were carried out in certain spaces, for example if we look at the different techniques employed in different spaces. We might consider, for instance, that of hammering forms and texts into stone surfaces at Dura. Most recorded examples of this technique come from the tower incorporated into the so-called ‘Temple of Bel’ in the northwest corner of the site (Baur and Rostovtzeff 1931: 99–111; Rostovtzeff 1934: 25). These hammered graffiti include human figures, apparently dancing, often holding their hands above their heads, and holding wreaths (Figure 3.2). These images seem to relate to religious activity which happened in the tower—and while the use of the towers of the fortification in religious practice at Dura is not fully understood, it has been pointed out that most of the sanctuaries incorporate towers in some form (Downey 1988).

Such graffiti, hammered and with similar scenes, were also found in the south tower of the citadel, and in another of the towers along the western



Figure 3.2 Drawing of ‘hammered’ graffiti from fortifications of Dura-Europos, courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.

side of the town (Goldman 1999: graffiti C.12; Rostovtzeff 1934: 25–6). We might then take these images, of dancing, wreath-holding figures, as evidence of religious activities occurring in the spaces where they appear. This may then indicate that spaces such as the south tower of the citadel, while not identified as sanctuaries, did have religious significance and perhaps even were used for religious activities, and in such a way we might relate the towers of the fortifications to those incorporated in the sanctuaries.

Indeed, while Rostovtzeff and the Yale team, on the basis of the graffiti referring to the *Tychē* of Dura discussed above, sought a Tycheum nearby (one was proposed in small, unidentified structure in the nearby block L8)¹¹, it might simply be the case that the Palmyrene gate itself, or one of its towers, served as a Tycheum—the link between the *Tychē* of a town and its fortifications being an obvious one (similar to the Heracles of Hetra: Kaizer 2000). In this way, graffiti can assist in the elucidation of the use of certain spaces, where their architectural form fails to identify them, or identifies only one of their purposes.

CONTEXTUALISING GRAFFITI

This section considers the graffiti in different types of structures as one means of contextualising graffiti. The texts and images found in fortifications and military structures, houses and sanctuaries, allow us to consider broader groups of graffiti across the site and consider the graffiti by context.

Fortifications and Military Structures

Just over 20 per cent of the graffiti at Dura were found on the fortifications (not including that of the tower incorporated in the Bel sanctuary), and much of this, with over 200 examples, came from the main gate of the city, the Palmyrene gate (see Figure 3.3). Many of these graffiti could be described as having a religious character, with over a fifth of those on the stone gate being of the formula ‘may so-and-so be remembered by the god’: *mnēsthē* plus (e.g.) Barlaas, Timarkos or Aurelios (Barlaas and Timarkos: Baur and Rostovtzeff 1931: 100, nos. H.11 and H.14; Aurelios: Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929: 33, no. R.5; on this formula, Rehm 1940; at Ephesos, Taeuber 2005). Less often, the formula names ‘the writer’ rather than a specific name. Examples of this formula are found scratched, chipped, hammered, painted or scratched and painted. The same formula occurs in more formal inscriptions on altars (e.g. Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929: 46). Overall, this type of graffiti comprise almost 12 per cent of the total textual graffiti of the town, the largest proportion of any recognisable group. While these cluster in certain high traffic areas, they do not usually refer directly to other graffiti (unlike the dialogues discussed by Benefiel, this volume). However, we might see them in a different sort of dialogue, in which similar graffiti collect together, with people writing similar messages to those made before them in the same places (as those graffiti discussed by Mairs, this volume).

In these *mnēsthē* graffiti, writing is not simply a way of making one’s mark but a means of making a religious statement. Indeed, the recording of this formula is part of its invocation, and its continued physical presence, its solid materiality, ensures the act of remembrance, in which ‘matter appears to bind thought’ (Fleming 2001: 13). The physical presence of the text would seem to be an important part of its usefulness: the graffito was a means by which a text could speak for itself long after the writer has gone. The recording of the name here contrasts with the anonymity of modern graffiti (or pseudo-anonymity in ‘tags’: Lachmann 1988). The notion that graffiti-writing is an act of subversion is belied by the many graffiti at Dura, especially those of the *mnēsthē* formula which include the name of the author. That this formula occurs throughout the site, on interior and exterior surfaces, in public areas and private ones, indicates that such practices as are reflected in the graffiti are not easily spatially confined to certain spaces.

Where analogy with modern graffiti is perhaps more fruitful is in the use of graffiti as a means to take possession of particular spaces (although on graffiti as marking practice rather than territorial marker, Frederick 2009: 212–13). For example, at Dura, we find the Roman military taking control and inscribing themselves all over the city, on its gates, along the city walls, in houses and in temples, demonstrating a particular relationship with their urban environment. Graffiti can, therefore, be used to examine the density



Figure 3.3 Plan of Dura-Europos, Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura.

and duration of military presence, for example, in particular parts of the fortifications: it is no surprise to find many soldiers scratched or painted their names into the stone of the Palmyrene gate and its towers, where they would have been posted on guard. The graffiti are visible from the ground

level up to a height of several metres above. Many of these were carefully carved or scratched into the gypsum blocks that made up the fortifications (Figure 3.4).

There is a range of levels of formality within the graffiti at Dura, and this is visible even within a single location such as the Palmyrene gate, where some appear to be quickly scratched, others more carefully executed. Some were carved and then painted, some made on plaster applied to the stone surfaces, and some set within *tabella ansata*, perhaps in imitation of more formal inscriptions.¹² These careful, deliberate and publicly visible texts show just how varied writing on walls was in the ancient world, and how different it is to that in modern societies: these were not subversive texts in any sense, as the people making them often *were* the authorities, in this case Roman military personnel, and they identify themselves by name and title. The time necessitated to plaster a surface, and then carve and paint it are not indicative of acts taking place outside of normative behaviours (or at least those of the military, if not the civil, communities). And while these texts might be contrasted with large, monumental, official inscriptions, such as that on the arch of Trajan outside Dura's walls (Baur et al. 1933: 3–4, 56–68), in their placement all over the inner walls of the gate passage, most at approximately standing height, they were still highly visible and in an area of very high traffic. Complicating this picture are a number of Safaitic graffiti found within the Palmyrene gate, of uncertain date. While these



Figure 3.4 Photo of texts in Palmyrene gate. Dura photograph b109, courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.

form a very small percentage of the total, and have problematic readings, they nevertheless force us to ask if there was any restriction on who might be able to make their mark in such spaces (Macdonald 2005b).

Graffiti made and used by the military are not only evident on the fortifications. In houses taken over for military use on the northern side of the city, including those in blocks E4 and E8 (see Figure 3.3), graffiti are amongst the evidence demonstrating the military adaptation and use of these structures. In the southern half of block E4, a large courtyard house was taken over by the Roman military early in the third century, pictorial graffiti included a boat, and a combination of images, texts and Roman numerals made a calendar on the wall of another room. There were also lists of names, and a text in which a soldier venerates his commander (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: nos. 612 and 613). Interestingly, the only Latin graffito from this house—all others were in Greek—was the word *conticuere*, which Rostovtzeff took to be the opening word of *Aeneid* 2 (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 48, no. 628/AE 1937: 00238). Similarly, the opening lines of the *Aeneid* were found scratched into the wall in the so-called Palace of the Dux Ripae (see Figure 3.3), a palatial residence associated with the Roman military and built on the northern side of the town in the third century (Rostovtzeff et al. 1952: 55, no. 960/AE 1954: 00263).¹³ It is unsurprising that where we do find hints of literary Latin at Dura, it is in contexts associated with the Roman military (in the case of the palace, even if it is not that of the *dux ripae*, the building should still be associated with the upper echelons of the military garrison at the site). What is perhaps more surprising is that despite the relatively small number of Latin graffiti at Dura—less than 50—there are still two examples of such ‘literary’ texts. The first words of *Aeneid* 1 and 2 were, of course, common graffiti centuries earlier at Pompeii. They might be less readily expected on the third-century Euphrates. In the Palace of the Dux, on the eastern edge of the site immediately above the river the graffito was found in the ‘audience room’, room 59, immediately south of the larger of the building’s two colonnaded courtyards. The *Aeneid* graffito was found incomplete but what remained was scratched in clear Latin capitals. What are we to make of such texts in these contexts? The excavators stated, simply, that ‘they testify to the enormous popularity of Vergil’ (Rostovtzeff et al. 1952: 55), but as Milnor (2009) has shown, such texts need not be directly equated with a familiarity with such works, nor have a singular explanation for their prevalence (on such Vergilian graffiti generally, see Hoogma 1959). Was this an attempt of a Roman military man to show off his learned status, or was it a by-product of learning Latin?

As mentioned above, about 3 per cent of the known graffiti were in Latin (Figure 3.1). Of these, most come from the Praetorium and the Temple of Azzanathkona precinct. A few more come from houses, a shop, the Mithraeum and the Palace of the Dux. Of these, 15 per cent included legion names; others included personal names, dedications,

Roman numerals, a couple of consular dates, and the ‘literary’ graffiti of Vergilian quotes discussed above. Of course, Latin is also known from the site from the parchments and papyri, but these were almost entirely formal military documents (including e.g. rolls and rosters). Given the large number of soldiers, who are sometimes identified as such in graffiti from their titles, scratching their names throughout the site in Greek, it is observable that Latin is largely reserved for formal texts. This is true not only for the preserved parchments and papyri, but also the formal painted inscriptions of the Praetorium (Rostovtzeff 1934: 224–6, no. 560), while Greek is evident as the language of everyday written practice and communication (Pollard 2000: 134–8; Rosenfeld and Potchebutzsky 2009: 204). Legion names are frequent amongst the few extant Latin graffiti, and this might hint at the propensity of soldiers to reproduce group affiliations in Latin. It is interesting that even within the military, the use of different languages depends not only on context but on the *content* of what was being written.¹⁴

Just over 80 per cent of the textual graffiti were Greek; the remainder was bilingual (or combined, e.g. Latin texts in Greek letters), in Semitic languages, or pictorial without text. We might compare these proportions with those of parchments and papyri in Latin and Greek in the third century. The civil texts of this period are almost entirely in Greek, with a Hebrew prayer (*P. Dura* 11), a Syriac deed of sale (*P. Dura* 28), and two documents in Greek with another language on the same document (Latin and Aramaic, *P. Dura* 26 and 27 respectively, being the only exceptions). The military documents, all of the third century, are almost entirely in Latin, save for some letters and fragments in Greek. The graffiti therefore show that Greek was the written language of civil Dura—and, indeed, of many members of the Roman military community. Latin is much more confined, to military documents (including Dura’s famed *feriale*) and, in graffiti, to names of legions among a small number of other texts. Might we read, in the names of legions and the fragments of Vergil, a ‘functional’ level of Latin? We might also detect a boundary between formal usage of Latin in military documents and the more informal use of Greek by the military in other contexts.

A number of other types of graffiti occur repeatedly in military contexts. For instance, there are a number of Rotas-Sator squares, a palindrome formed by the words *rotas/opera/tenet/larepos/sator*. This formula, known from elsewhere in the empire including at Pompeii and Cirencester, has been variously interpreted as a magical formula, a Christian text (rearranged, the letters can spell *pater noster*; the word *tenet* forms a cross if read from top to bottom as well as across the third line: Fishwick 1964), as a Mithraic text (Moeller 1973), and as a text of Egyptian origin (Marcovich 1983). The Rotas-Sator square appears three times in the temple of Azzanathkona, twice scratched, once painted in red (Rostovtzeff 1934: 159–61), and these seem to have been made after the temple was taken

over for use by the Roman garrison. Whether or not this was a Christian symbol, at Dura it occurs in spaces used by the military. It appears not only in Roman letters, but also in Greek transliteration of the square (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 486, no. 809). This is one of a number of Latin texts in Greek letters (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 490), and texts with a mix of Greek and Latin letters and spellings (e.g. Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 186, no. 710 and 36, no. 614) which together might be taken as evidence for the Greek-speaking and -writing soldiers of the Dura garrison learning some Latin, and deploying it in certain contexts.

Housing

A further 22 per cent of known graffiti at Dura were found within its houses, a number which increases a further 5 per cent if we include the palaces and the houses in E4 and E8 which were converted for residential military use as discussed above. Pictorial and textual graffiti and dipinti were found within the houses with a range of subjects. The houses in which graffiti were found range from the largest houses at Dura, occupying a full city block, to small houses consisting of just a few rooms. A tenth of the graffiti from the houses were the *mnēsthē* formula, but also found were horoscopes, alphabets, lists of various types, accounts and images including hunting scenes and ships. It is true that ‘so deeply internalised is the modern prohibition against domestic graffiti that ancient historians will read their survival as “evidence” that the building or room question had a public function’ (Fleming 2001: 30, 171 n. 5). At Dura, however, it is evident that writing on walls inside houses was relatively commonplace; graffiti on walls were recorded in 36 per cent of the approximately 130 excavated houses, and given that there is a high correlation between preserved wall height and preserved graffiti, this was probably an even more widespread practice than for which existing evidence survives.

One house, near the centre of the town, had so many graffiti scratched into its walls it was named ‘The House of the Archives’ by the excavators (Rostovtzeff and Welles 1931); it was also called ‘The House of Nebuchelul’ and the ‘House of the Clothes Merchant’ after its owner, identified by graffiti, or B8H following the site naming conventions (the texts from this house have been discussed in detail by Ruffing 2000).¹⁵ The large number of graffiti from this house, a total of 95, can be related to the number of associated commercial functions; the house intercommunicated with several shops and was immediately adjacent to others. Many of the graffiti record transactions and commodities, accounts and tabulations. Some also contain dates, the earliest of which is 218 CE; the others, including horoscopes, cluster around 235 to 240 CE. One graffito from this house has played a part in the reconstruction of the historical sequence at Dura, as it refers to the Persians descending on the site, in 239 CE, some time before the demise of the town at the hands of the Sasanians, probably in 256

(Baur et al. 1933: 112–14, no. 233b/SEG 7.743; Welles 1941: 101). The records incised into the walls of the rooms provide a wealth of information, including prices for goods (no. 202/SEG 7.413, etc), tabulations in Greek alphabetic numerals and Roman numerals (no. 210/SEG 7.398), counts in tallies (no. 211/SEG 7.388), evidence of trade relationships with sites such as Apphadana (no. 221/SEG 7.419; no. 227/SEG 7.417), and evidence of money-lending among other commercial activities (no. 270/SEG 7.430; no. 273/SEG 7.429).

Another example is the ‘House of Lysias’. This large structure, occupying a full block of the town (D1; Figure 3.3), also takes its name from graffiti found within it. Exceptionally well preserved, the house was excavated late in the Yale programme, so was never published, although extensive records are held in the Yale archive and a re-examination of the remains is currently underway (du Breil de Pontbriand 2006; Gunn 1965). In this grand house, which included four courtyards, graffiti concentrate in a couple of spaces. Two, including one *mnēsthē* type, were found in the main courtyard, but all other recorded examples came from room 9, a small, passageway-like room off the court, and in rooms 13 and 13¹, the connected entrance passageways into the house. In room 9, there were a series of scratched *mnēsthē* graffiti, and an account, but there was also a text which notes the travel and death of one Lysias, *epistates*, in a form that recalls more formal inscriptions (Frye et al. 1955: 147–8, no. 16). In rooms 13 and 13¹, both of which were equipped with benches of the appropriate height for sitting, 10 graffiti were recorded, which include a number of different personal names (including that of Lysias), an account and a series of *mnēsthē* graffiti with different names. In such spaces it is not difficult to imagine visitors awaiting admittance deeper into the house scratching their names and dedications in idle moments.

Graffiti within houses can hint at room use, activity areas and even the objects which once filled their rooms. For example, we find an apparent household inventory scratched into a wall of house C7G3, room 19 (Baur et al. 1933: 153–7, no. 300). This text has been interpreted as a household inventory due to its location and in particular because it lists a series of objects, perhaps some of the contents of the house, including worn blankets, and other items of clothing and ceramics.

In some instances, graffiti can be used to examine the use of space in particular structures. For example, in some structures with domestic components lists of foodstuffs were found, perhaps in spaces for the storage or preparation of food. Such is the case, for instance, in the Palace of the Redoubt (also known as the *Strategeion*), where in a small anteroom, graffiti mention hams, cabbages, fish and grain (Baur et al. 1933: 148–9).¹⁶ Similarly, in E4, a large house taken over for use by the military, in a small room off the main courtyard we find a graffito concerning a number of meals.¹⁷ Elsewhere in the house, there is an acclamation to Zeus Serapis, and a ‘Vergilian’ graffito (nos. 234 and 628). A *parapegma*, a calendar

for a month, including representations of the planets or days of the week, with peg-holes for marking the day, was also found (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 40–6, no. 622; Snyder 1936; Lehoux 2007: 170–1).¹⁸ Discovered as it was within a house converted for military use, it may well have counted towards or marked a date of Roman religious or military significance, but this is uncertain (Lehoux 2007: 170). What can be said, from the peg holes, is that this scratched design was meant to be used: it was deliberate and something that was for repeated and sustained usage, not a haphazard and thoughtless scratch. All of these graffiti attest to activities which would not be discernable from either architecture or the artefacts recorded by the Yale team. Graffiti are usually thought of as spontaneous texts, written in moments of boredom, but at Dura (as elsewhere, as the chapters in this volume attest), we have in such texts and images not singular written events but those which were planned and used and responded to over a period of time. Overall, the houses have graffiti which range from the practical, like lists or accounts, to religious invocations, a calendar (*parapegma*), and horoscopes.

In houses, graffiti can also be used to examine the presence of the Roman military throughout the ‘civilian’ part of the site. In house C7C, for instance, the billeting of Roman soldiers was proposed on the basis of a pictorial graffito. The graffito shows two gladiators standing inside a temple, with spiral fluted columns; the amphitheatre at Dura, of course, was directly associated with the Roman military presence at the site and the representation of gladiators here is suggestive. Also suggestive of military presence in this house is a Greek graffito which asks for the remembrance of *contubernales* (Rostovtzeff 1934: 39–40, no. 401 and pl. 33), and military equipment seemingly found in the same house seems to confirm a military presence if not a military occupation in this structure.¹⁹ We might, in light of such graffiti, reconsider the way in which we examine communities within certain spaces: rather than thinking of the northern side of the town as the ‘military quarter’, and examining the military community from named structures associated with them, we might also trace people and groups throughout the city by the marks that they make in different contexts. Elsewhere in the same block, house C7F (the ‘House of the Frescoes’) has, amongst a series of Greek graffiti, one which reads *leg(io) III Cyr(enaica)*, which would also seem to also indicate the presence of military personnel from this legion within the house (Baur et al. 1933: 151, no. 294; Rostovtzeff and Little 1933).

Another group which might be identifiable in the Durene graffiti is children. Following the criteria outlined by Huntley (this volume), a series of animal drawings and ‘nonsense’ writing, interpreted as ‘magical’ by the excavators, might actually be that of children (Goldman 1999: no. E.6; Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 497–8). These graffiti, from E7, the temple of Azzanthathkona converted for the military use, would then corroborate the artefact evidence from the military garrison which

itself indicates the presence of children throughout this sector of the city (Baird 2006, forthcoming).

Sanctuaries

While many spaces other than sanctuaries had religious significance, as is demonstrated by the graffiti in the towers discussed above and the many religious remembrances made on surfaces throughout the city, sanctuaries too had graffiti (on religion and language at Dura, Kaizer 2009). For instance, a concentration of abecedaria which were found in the Christian house-church led Kraeling to conclude they were apotropaic (Kraeling 1967: 89–90)—although a Latin alphabet in the correct order adjacent to one that was ‘scrambled’ was suggested to be the key to a cipher (Rostovtzeff et al. 1952: 41). Alphabets (sometimes incomplete, or incorrect, and in both Greek and Latin) were also found in houses, public buildings, the Palace of the Dux and a range of Roman military structures (for the complete list of alphabets at Dura, see Rostovtzeff et al. 1952: 40, n. 42). Another interesting manifestation of texts which have been classified as graffiti in sanctuaries are those in the synagogue, in which carefully painted Iranian textual dipinti painted onto parts of the murals do not deface the paintings, but rather add to them, and show the ways in which different texts might accumulate (Grenet 1988).

The Mithraeum (in block J7 on Figure 3.3), too, demonstrates graffiti were a part of the normal use-life of the sanctuary, rather than a defacement of it. Hundreds of graffiti and dipinti were found on coats of plaster in the Mithraeum, although many of these were discovered as fragments that had fallen from the walls (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936a: 116–17). The graffiti and dipinti in the Mithraeum related to the rituals carried out there. These included lists (e.g. with prices of food, related to banqueting Rostovtzeff et al. 1936a: 124–6, nos. 861–2), lists of names, *mnēsthē* texts as found elsewhere throughout the site, as well as invocations of Mithras and other religious texts, such as a number with the ‘*nama*’ formula. (These work in a similar way to the *mnēsthē* invocations, with the word *nama*, of probable Iranian origin, meaning ‘hail!’ followed by the name of a man, and sometimes that of the god).²⁰ The names sometimes include persons of military or religious standing as well; it was originally planned for these texts to be used to examine the social and religious structure of the Mithraeum’s congregation, but the project was not completed (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936a: 122).

Shops and Other Public Buildings

No type of structure, it seems, was immune from graffiti. Not only were they found in houses, in military structures and sanctuaries, but a whole range of public buildings. These include bath buildings (Baur and

Rostovtzeff 1931: 111–12, nos. H56 and H57), as well as shops. In a shop in block B8 (H17) a graffito renders a drawing of what appears to be the main city gate, and the adjacent walls and towers (Goldman 1999: no. G.1; Rostovtzeff 1934: 6–7, pl. 33.1), a theme which occurs in pictorial graffiti elsewhere in the town, for example in the Temple of Azzanath-kona (Goldman 1999: no. G.2) and in the temple of Bel (Goldman 1999: no. F.3). Were people simply drawing what was familiar, or was drawing the fortifications (especially in mid-third century Syria) apotropaic in some way?

Again, when it comes to graffiti in such spaces we are confronted with the issue of formality versus informality and whether or not a graffito was related to an ‘original’ purpose. We can take for example words found scratched above a *loculus* in a tomb of the necropolis (Toll 1946: 26–7), or the letters which functioned as labels on the diamond-shaped niches of the *Chreophylakeion*, where archives were kept: both of these were classified as graffiti by excavators (Rostovtzeff 1934: 81–4; Rostovtzeff et al. 1944: 169–76), but neither could be argued to be other than deliberate—in the case of the *Chreophylakeion*, the markings were integral to the function of the niches. In such cases, graffiti were defined more by their technique than by any judgement as to their purpose or placement, again showing the problematic use of ‘graffiti’ both as a term and a concept for understanding ancient writing, either in textual or pictorial form.

CONCLUSIONS

The ubiquity of pictorial and textual graffiti from within houses and on other structures shows that writing on walls in ancient Dura was in many ways a fundamentally different practice from modern graffiti. It is also very different from graffiti of sites like Pompeii, for instance in the proportion of religious texts, or in the lack of ‘erotic’ graffiti at Dura. The range of graffiti shows the variety of concerns and interests of its makers, from the depiction of camel caravans (Baur et al. 1933: 221–2, pl. 23.2; Goldman 1999: G.23), to that of gladiators (Rostovtzeff 1934: 38–9; Goldman 1999: F.5, G.21), from intricate calendars (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 40, 42–3, fig. 2) to household inventories (Baur et al. 1933: 153–7, no. 300/SEG 7.431 and no. 301/SEG 7.432).

What might be taken as a surprising lack of graffiti from exterior public spaces at Dura—aside from the fortifications, there is relatively little on the exterior of houses or other buildings—in fact is probably linked to preservation. The plaster on the interior of buildings is often well preserved due to the nature of their collapse; the roofs and upper floors of structures which filled the ground floor rooms created a fill which protected the inner walls. Exterior walls, when they remained standing, seem much more prone to weathering and erosion, as can still be seen on the site today.

The density of writing in certain parts of the site does indicate that certain communities had a higher propensity for making graffiti. Above all other groups, we can observe the military as frequently making their mark. In part, this is because the identification of graffiti as having been made by members of the military community is sometimes more straightforward than others. Another component of the density of military writing is time: the large number of individual graffiti in the Palmyrene gate is in part due to the simple fact that many soldiers were stationed there for long periods. We might even consider these texts the product of bored soldiers, using the sharp implements that were part of their kit to make their mark and keep themselves occupied on watch.²¹ Similarly, we can imagine people waiting in the entranceway of the House of Lysias for admittance scratching into the plaster of the wall whilst they waited. Yet many of these texts also have religious significance, asking for the god's remembrance: texts made in idle moments are not necessarily idle texts (contrary to the attitude in some ancient authors; see Chaniotis this volume page 192). A much more widespread practice of graffiti making can be seen in the *mnēsthē* texts. Many of these, too, were made by members of the military, as can be seen from the titles they use to describe themselves (*beneficiarius*, etc).

The diversity of graffiti at Dura is also evident. We can see how graffiti might be evidence of activities occurring in particular spaces, such as the religious practices in fortification towers, or how graffiti might be used to examine the presence and movement of particular groups throughout private and public spaces, such as that of the Roman military. We might also see the linguistic tendencies of particular communities, with the use of Latin in certain contexts, and bilingual texts, or the overwhelming ubiquity of Greek. Graffiti have been used to identify the family or individuals occupying certain houses, such as that of Lysias, or even the owner's occupation, such as that of Nebuchelas, whose economic engagements were scratched into the walls of his house.

Chaniotis (this volume page 193), following Langner, notes that we might think of ancient graffiti, as having a temporal relationship to that structure which it is made on: graffiti being defined as texts and images that were not part of an 'original' programme.²² I agree that how we might define graffiti is spatially contingent, and 'unofficial' in some sense, but I think this definition might be somewhat restrictive: buildings are not something which exist at one point in time in a pure form and then have their purpose diluted. Graffiti on structures are indicative of the use life of buildings, and in that way graffiti are very much part of a building's fabric. Like the careful Iranian *dipinti* made on parts of the Synagogue murals, the many *nama* graffiti of the Mithraeum, or the hammered figures in the city towers, these texts and images are part of the life of the structure, not an act of defacement nor even a change of use. That they are not 'original' does not make them any less deliberate or meaningful. At Dura, we can be certain that graffiti were an integral part of the urban landscape.

NOTES

- * Thanks are due to a number of readers who commented usefully on versions of this paper, including Serafina Cuomo, Simon James, Ted Kaizer, Andy Merrills, and Daniel Stewart. All mistakes, of course, remain my own.
1. Given the placement of the inscription on the Palmyrene gate it seems unlikely that it was indeed the first discovered, and indeed Yale's own report elsewhere designates this text as one recorded by the earlier expedition of Cumont: Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929: 41.
 2. Goldman's study usefully brought together the pictorial graffiti, previously published in disparate reports, but neglected the relationships between different graffiti and between pictorial graffiti and accompanying texts. Goldman organised his study by subject: equestrians; hunters and quarry; figures standing, reclining, seated; the dedicated, signs and symbols; fauna; narrative and ritual; and miscellaneous. That Pompeii has been formative in graffiti studies is evident when Goldman notes the 'curious lack of salacious drawings' at Dura, which he thought might reflect censorship by the excavators rather than a genuine absence (Goldman 1999: 20). Goldman also included the incised images on altars as graffiti in his study. A study of graffiti found in the excavations conducted by the current *Mission Franco-Syrienne de Doura-Europos* is forthcoming by C. Allag in *Europos-Doura Études* 6. The pictorial graffiti of Dura were also published in Langner's study (Langner 2001: 129–131).
 3. A number of graffiti were also found during the earlier expedition of F. Cumont (1926); these are also included in the counts given here.
 4. On the composition of the plaster at Dura, Dandrau 1997.
 5. Most painted and incised markings on pots published in Frye et al. 1955, and du Mesnil du Buisson 1959.
 6. For instance, a gold ring with the inscription 'Omonia', Rostovtzeff et al. 1936b: 175.
 7. At least 11 wooden tablets were recorded, with known findspots; several at Yale also show the preserved indentations of markings. Field numbers, with accession numbers in parentheses where these are at Yale: F1013, F1020 (1933.439), F1475 (1933.441c), F1897, F2161a (1933.441a), F2161b, G1341a, G1386, G1441, G957, H503. An interesting recent study has examined writing equipment in still lifes of Pompeian paintings: Meyer 2009.
 8. On the intaglios from Dura, see Baird forthcoming; Guiraud 1992.
 9. Tabulations of graffiti are derived by combining all of those enumerated in the preliminary and final reports at Dura, as well as those in Frye et al. 1955 and Cumont 1926.
 10. G. Coqueugniot will be writing a report on the new recording of the hammered graffiti of the fortifications for *Europos-Doura Études* 7, tentatively titled 'Les graffiti des fortifications d'Europos-Doura'.
 11. Baur et al. 1932: 13, 37–9. The same structure was referred to as the 'Custom's house' by Pillet.
 12. A Latin text was found on a wooden *tabella ansata* (a plaque, with holes and notches to be affixed to a surface) inside the Palmyrene gate: Baur and Rostovtzeff 1931: 148–9.
 13. The 'Palace of the Dux' was itself ascribed a name based on a title found on fragments of a dipinto, but this identification has now been questioned; see especially Edwell 2008: 128–32.
 14. On languages in the Roman army, Adams 2003: 760–1. Adams (2003: 299) also discusses a Greek inscription (*CIL* 3.125) in which only the military rank of the soldier who set up the inscription is given in Latin.

15. The texts from this house were initially published by Baur et al. 1933: 39, 79–145, 222; Rostovtzeff and Welles 1931; Rostovtzeff 1934: 47–9, 90–7.
16. Room ‘D’ on Pillet’s plan Baur et al. 1933: pl. 3.
17. Room 11, no 612; Baur et al. 1933: 612–28.
18. The Yale archive contains an unpublished photograph of the *parapegma*: y-484a. A number of calendrical systems were used at Dura, some concurrently, with the Seleucid system being used into the Parthian period alongside Parthian dating systems (Welles et al. 1959: 6) and into the Roman period when it was known as ‘the former reckoning’ in some documents from the site (*P. Dura* 25, 28, and 31).
19. A ‘bronze rosette’, field number E429, was recorded from this house; other artefacts with this description are interpreted as copper alloy *phalera*, from military dress and horse equipment. This field number is no longer associated with an artefact, however, so it is not possible to confirm this identification. Elsewhere on the site, in a house adjacent to shrine of Aphlad in N8, a pictorial and textual graffiti together might be taken to indicate military presence, as the lion was proposed as an emblem of one of the Roman legions stationed at Dura, and occurs with two *tabella ansata* (Rostovtzeff et al. 1936a: 374–5).
20. Further on the Mithraic graffiti, see Francis 1975.
21. On the military accoutrements of Durene soldiers, James 2004.
22. Similar definitions are taken up by those studying the graffiti of other periods; see for instance Plesch 2002: 168.

4 Identifying Children's Graffiti in Roman Campania

A Developmental Psychological Approach

Katherine V. Huntley

In the past, certain figural graffiti from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae have been interpreted by archaeologists and epigraphers as the work of children (Mau 1899: 482; Koloski-Ostrow 1990: 59; Maulucci 1993: 77; Beard 2008: 15). These interpretations have often been linked to the crudeness of the graffiti and to their relatively low placement on walls. However, due to the lack of a systematic process for identifying children as the authors of graffiti beyond such basic assumptions, there has been little discussion of its potential for the study of children in the Roman world.

This chapter presents a new methodology that has been developed for identifying graffiti that was likely to have been the work of young children. This has been applied to graffiti from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae. This methodology is rooted in findings from the field of developmental psychology concerning the representational capacities of children (Kellogg 1959; Kellogg 1969; Di Leo 1970; Goodnow 1978; Cox 1992). With the exception of graffiti that bear markers of particular religious or ethnic affiliations (see, for example, Lacerenza 1996), it is often difficult to glean much information about the social identities of people carving marks into walls (although see Taylor, this volume). Generally, we are able only to make educated guesses as to some facets of their identities, such as gender, profession or socio-economic status (see, at Pompeii, Benefiel, this volume, page 26–9). However, it is possible to identify the work of children because as a social group they are defined by physiological and psychological characteristics: their brains are developing and these changes, which in turn affect children's capacity for visual representation, may be reflected in graffiti because the way in which children create such representations is directly related to their cognitive development (Kellogg and O'Dell 1967; Sundberg and Ballinger 1968; Efland 2002).

This chapter also surveys recent research in the study of children in the Roman world and how graffiti can address some of the less well-understood aspects of this study. By using this developmental psychological framework I have identified 161 instances of children's graffiti from four sites in Campania (Huntley, in progress). Here, I will outline this framework, discuss

the subject matter and location of the graffiti, and suggest how the identification of the authorship of graffiti might be used in the larger challenge of identifying the impact of children on the archaeological record. The ability to identify the authorship of some graffiti will assist in our understanding of the lives of children in Campania through the recognition of their behavioural and activity patterns. It can also assist archaeologists in identifying the presence of children without the necessity of their physical remains. The nature and locations of graffiti may also elucidate children's activities in both domestic and non-domestic contexts.

STUDYING CHILDHOOD OR STUDYING CHILDREN?

The field of childhood studies in Roman history and archaeology is now well established, but often it has focused on childhood rather than children. Compared with research regarding the socio-cultural construction of childhood, the study of children as active agents who contribute to the archaeological record has lagged behind. Gaps remain in our knowledge of children's activities, behaviour and authority due to both the nature of the evidence and modern perceptions of children and childhood.

The recognition of 'children' and 'childhood' as culturally defined concepts is hardly new (Cohen 2007), and research on children and childhood in Roman history has increased steadily since the late 1980s and early 1990s when there was a resurgence of interest on the topic of the family (Golden 1988; Wiedemann 1989; Dixon 1992; Evans 1991; Bradley 1991). More recent work by social historians such as Rawson (2003), Harlow and Laurence (2002) and Mantle (2002), demonstrates the wealth of knowledge regarding childhood as well as the innovative ways in which researchers are approaching children's presence in the past. Children are no longer seen as neglected, passive entities on the social periphery, and are now understood to have been significant, functioning members of their communities. For instance, Mantle (2002) expresses reservations about the idea that children's roles in Roman religion may have been dependent on any perception of children as ritualistically pure. Rather, she suggests that children were included in rituals primarily because they were considered members of their communities. Archaeologists have also made strides in furthering the understanding of childhood in the Roman world: the majority of studies regarding children are concerned primarily with socio-cultural constructions (Cohen and Rutter 2007), and have focused on iconography (see, for example, Huskinson 1996; Boatwright 2005; D'Ambra 2007; Sorabella 2007) and/or burial evidence (Gowland 2001; Martin-Kilcher 2000; Becker 2007).

Nonetheless, it is notoriously difficult to study Roman children using archaeological evidence, particularly in non-mortuary contexts in which the physical remains of a physically immature individual is absent. Even two

decades after Lillehammer argued that children were active social agents (1989), children's activities remain more or less hidden in the dirt. Children have proven so difficult to study in part because they are often assumed to have behaved in spontaneous, random ways, making them inaccessible to archaeologists (Baxter 2005: 20). Some studies of children's behaviour have even suggested that children are responsible for disturbing the 'normal' order of the archaeological record created by the patterned activities of adults (Hammond and Hammond 1981). While children's behaviour may seem chaotic and impulsive, it is not. They follow their own 'rules', which may not be the same as those of adults, but nonetheless these 'rules' do structure behaviour (Cox 1992: 3). Moreover, not only are there social expectations that influence behaviour in different spatial and social contexts, children have been shown to be capable interpreters of these expectations (Baxter 2005: 59).

Often membership of a particular group is demonstrated through the presence of indicative material culture. There are many questions as to what constitutes children's material culture and how it is distinguished from that of adults. Children's material culture is usually identified through examination of objects such as games, toys and so-called infant feeders found in proximity to the body of a child in mortuary contexts (Ricotti 1995; Janssen 1996; Martin-Kilcher 2000; Norman 2003), and most of the items associated with Roman children were found in burials and tombs or as images in art (Rawson 2003: 128; Janssen 1996; Elderkin 1930) or are assumed to be children's because they conform to modern notions of what constitutes a child's object (Wilson 1980: 137). However, the fact of the matter is that Roman children's material culture cannot, for the most part, be distinguished from that of adults, and while toys, games, dolls and anything small or 'educational' have often associated with children, these associations are problematic. For instance, dolls are often difficult to distinguish from votive figurines (Shumka 1999: 617). Likewise, miniatures, such as miniature pots and tools, may also have been votives (Kiernan 2009). Dice and game pieces were undoubtedly used in games played by both adults and children. Abecedaria can be associated with adult learners as well as children or may have been religious or astrological symbols (Kraeling 1967: 90). Indeed, very few of these items have been found in settlement contexts, either because they were not there or were made of perishable materials that did not survive. With the exception of a child's bed from Herculaneum (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 113), both Pompeii and Herculaneum are virtually bereft of certainly identifiable children's objects: Allison did not identify a single 'child's object' in her study of the assemblages from 30 Pompeian houses (2004: 155). The archaeological evidence is therefore scant and further obfuscated by the problematic nature of what we recognise as 'children's objects'.

Romanists have also noted that children did not have separate spaces within houses as they have had in the traditional Anglo-American home

since the Victorian era (Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Allison 2004). While, as Allison rightly notes, this does not indicate ‘a lack of social definition’ (2004: 156), it has made their activity patterns difficult to discern and study. In Latin literature there are occasional remarks about children playing in the atrium (Verg. *Aen.* 7.379; Lucr. 4.401–4), but these are little more than passing references. What can be understood from such texts is that the Romans recognised some children as belonging to a distinct social group, with certain behavioural expectations, associated rituals, perceived biological and emotional differences and special rights and regulations under the law (Harlow and Laurence 2002: 35).¹

ANCIENT CAMPANIAN GRAFFITI

The graffiti discussed here come from four sites in the southern Italian region of Campania: the city of Pompeii, the town of Herculaneum and the villa sites of San Marco and Arianna near Stabiae. The figural graffiti from these sites form a sizeable data set.² In total, 545 instances of figural graffiti were analysed from these four sites, and it was found that 161 of these fit the criteria (defined below) for graffiti that were likely the work of young children. While information about the graffiti was primarily gathered from published excavation reports and the collections of inscriptions and graffiti, they were examined *in situ* where it was possible to do so.

Though these sites provide a relatively large number of graffiti to analyse, the data set is nonetheless highly fragmentary and many of the figural graffiti no longer survive. It is important for this analysis that the figural graffiti have survived *in situ* from the time they were uncovered or have been recorded with an illustration to allow for stylistic analysis, and therefore only graffiti meeting these criteria are included here. Prior to the twentieth century early excavators often regarded graffiti as peculiarities, so their discovery on walls were frequently mentioned only in passing (Laurence 1994: 96). The occasions on which they were treated as significant finds occurred primarily when a large number was found within a single property, such as at the *Casa del Criptoportico* or the Grand Palaestra in Pompeii, the *Casa dei Cervi* in Herculaneum and the *Villa Arianna* of Stabiae. The deterioration of wall surfaces from exposure over time and from damage caused by bombing during World War II means that many graffiti have since been lost. Thus the total of 545 graffiti from the four sites is rather small in comparison to the number of graffiti which were present when the different areas of the site were first excavated and even smaller than when the city was populated. Of these, I propose that 161 were likely to have been made by children for reasons outlined below.

Before continuing to analyse this data set it is necessary to state that throughout this study, graffiti are regarded as material culture, as artefacts,

which are the material remains of activities and decisions (Deetz 1968: 31). Here, graffiti are viewed as artefacts of play, a behaviour and a tool or method through which children negotiate, affect and come to understand culture. Play is neither trite nor limited to certain individuals or social groups. Rather, it is inextricably linked to growth and development and is something all children use and participate in no matter how underprivileged they may seem or how 'adult-like' their lives may appear. It is a process by which culture is transmitted, continued and changed (Fromberg and Bergen 1998: xvii). Play is often regarded as a leisure activity, which is spontaneous, non-serious and unproductive (Toner 1995: 20); ancient authors differentiated between play and learning as being at least partially exclusive of each other. Quintillian, for example, remarked that a child should be allowed to play, and learning should not be imposed too early, lest the child comes to dislike it (*Inst.* I. 20; see Rawson 2003: 127). On the contrary, sociological and anthropological studies have found that play is an integral part of a child's development; it is the work of childhood and of all children, regardless of gender or class (Fromberg and Bergen 1998: xv; Goldman 1998: xv).

A Developmental Psychological Approach to Figural Graffiti

A developmental psychological approach is useful because it enables us to plausibly identify certain graffiti as the work of children. That 161 examples can be identified in this way suggests that children were not insignificant producers of writing and drawing on buildings in Campania. The methodology used here is based on patterns and characteristics found in the drawings of young children. The study of the development of representational elements in children's drawings began in 1887 with the publication of Corrado Ricci's *L'art dei bambini*, and reached a peak in the 1960s and 1970s. Developmental psychologists found the most important aspect of children's drawings to be that they were the product of a process of representation rather than reproduction; children draw what they know rather than what they see (Di Leo 1970: 40). For instance, they draw opaque surfaces as transparent to show what they know lies beyond them: the legs of human figures are depicted in a boat when only the upper bodies should be visible, or, in an example from the Grand Palaestra in Pompeii (Figure 4.1c), a body turned sideways will show the entire lengths of both arms, even though one should be obscured. For these reasons, it is highly likely that this graffiti was produced by a child.

Cross-cultural studies and research by Di Leo (1970), Kellogg (1969), and Goodnow (1978) found that, with the exception of the severely handicapped, all children progress through a series of predictable phases of visual representational development, generally acknowledged as forming six stages (Lowenfeld and Brittain 1982; Malchiodi 1998: 64). The first of these stages is scribbling. This is an activity that all children engage in, and

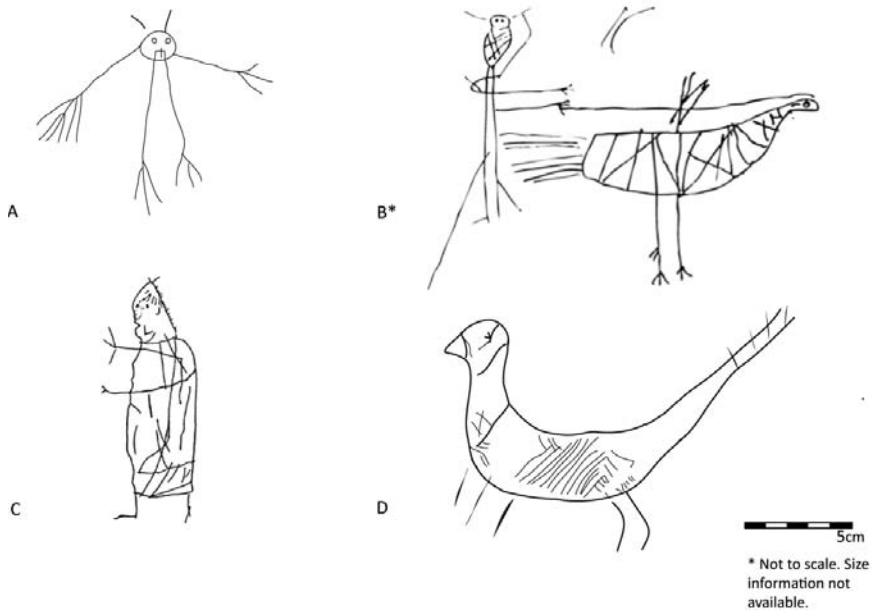


Figure 4.1 Possible children's graffiti from Pompeii:

- a) Human figure, drawing by author;
- b) Possible hunt (Maulucci 1993: 87, used by permission);
- c) Human figure in semi-profile (Maulucci 1993: 67);
- d) Five-legged bird (adapted by author from PPM 2.437, fig. 6).

it fulfils motor and visual needs in the process of cognitive development (Di Leo 1970: 18). Scribbles are the first type of drawings that young children produce, and all children produce them regardless of whether or not they are encouraged by adults. Kellogg, for example, found that Nepalese children not only showed experience of scribbling despite never having had access to paper and crayons, but also scribbled many of the same forms and patterns as American children (Kellogg 1969: 98).

The second stage in development is a preschematic or basic form stage (Malchiodi 1998: 66). At this point children begin to draw what Kellogg has termed 'diagrams'; these are six simple shapes that are combined to form representational figures. Five of these are geometrically regular: the rectangle/square, the oval/circle, the triangle, the 'Greek cross', and the diagonal cross. The sixth diagram, 'the odd shape', is a catchall category for a deliberate line enclosing an irregular area (Kellogg 1969: 45).

The third stage is sometimes termed the schematic stage (Malchiodi 1998: 66). In this stage drawings continue to become more complex. Three or more diagrams are combined to form aggregates. Children draw human figures with specific schema (Kellogg 1969: 52). A graffito from the outside of the *Termopolio dell'Aselline* in Pompeii (Figure 4.1a) shows a human

figure, which has developed from the combination of a diagonal cross and an oval, and as such, provides an example of this stage of development.

The fourth stage is characterised by the development of a visual schema and a movement towards visual realism. This is the point in development when children begin to create more objective representations. For instance, the earliest drawings of human beings are always from a head on perspective, since face to face interaction is the most important aspect of development and socialization (Waksler 1991: 13).

The fifth stage develops this visual realism and is, for example, when the representation of a human in profile begins to emerge. This is a relatively late stage in children's development; it reflects a change from subjectivism to objectivism and visual realism (Di Leo 1970: 80). There is a rather wide period of transition and researchers have identified it as happening between the ages of seven and ten years (Di Leo 1970: 80). This transition is sometimes marked by certain confusions, such as the maintaining of the second eye. A graffito from Pompeii's Grand Palaestra (Figure 4.1c) shows a human figure likely to have been drawn by a child at this transitory stage. Though the figure is turned to the side, the child still shows both the arms and also both eyes remain on the side of the face.

Within these stages there are certain patterns in the drawings that result from conformation to a number of set 'rules'. Kellogg (1969) looked at approximately 500,000 drawings of children from a diverse group of cultures and found that they followed the same 'rules' and produced the same patterns in their drawings, regardless of socio-cultural background.

The main 'rules' that children obey when producing images are as follows. First they are economical in their use of units. They will use a graphic unit, such as a particular type of circle, line, or human figure repeatedly (Cox 1992: 49). For instance, the same unit may be used to represent both arms and legs as is the case with a graffito from the *Casa dell'Criptoportico* in Pompeii (Figure 4.1b). When children do make a change, they are usually conservative. Generally, a change in meaning will be expressed by varying a single element. For example, when drawing family members, a child may express each member's individuality by varying the height of each figure. Children tend to vary supplementary parts, leaving the central aspects unaffected. They may draw a human figure reaching for something by adjusting the arms while the body remains upright, facing forward (Goodnow 1978: 65). The graffito from the *Casa dell'Criptoportico* (Figure 4.1b) displays this characteristic; the human-like figure's arms bend to reach for something.

Another 'rule' is that parts are related to one another according to specific principles. Some principles relate to boundaries and the ways in which units are allotted their own spaces. Young children, for example, often avoid the intentional overlapping of parts. When drawing human figures composed of a circular head with arms and legs radiating outward, they may add hair or ears but they will not come into contact with the limbs

in any way. Other principles relate to the orientation of figures, with, for example most figures being aligned on a single axis. Generally this progresses to the use of perpendicular axes, particularly once the horizontal axis is understood to represent the ground (Cox 1992: 49).

Children's graphic work, it is argued, relates to their thinking. For instance, 'wrong' proportions are not the result of a mistake on the child's part; a child's frame of reference is not the same as that of an adult. Additionally, the relationship between an object and its expression is not direct. The child emphasises what he or she feels is important and omits or de-emphasises what is considered minor. Hence the head is usually the most prominent element of a human figure, and as such appears as a pattern in the drawings of young children (Di Leo 1970: 122). Developmentally, the earliest human figures drawn by children are comprised of a head, with limbs being added next (Di Leo 1970: 50). Two of these types of figures were found outside the *Termopolio dell'Aselline* in Pompeii (Figure 4.1a), and therefore have been interpreted here as the work of children. Children tend to prefer balanced images, with units radiating outwards. This is why early human figures are drawn as heads with attached limbs, and why images like suns and flowers are popular motifs in the earliest drawings of young children (Kellogg 1969: 34).

Additionally, children define representations with certain individual attributes. For example, a child will transform a human figure into an animal through the addition of ears on top of the head (Cox 1992: 34). A similar pattern may be observed in a graffito from the *Casa degli amanti* (I.10.11) in Pompeii (Figure 4.1d). This graffito of a five-legged bird was found with two others, each of those having four legs (CIL 4: 8395). This is an example of a drawing in which the child distinguishes the 'non-human' elements of the creature by exaggerating the number of legs. Since a defining characteristic of representations of humans is that they have two legs, this depiction emphasises the bird's 'non-humanness' by giving it additional legs.

The interpretation of the graffiti as the work of young children, therefore, rests on these stylistic criteria. The body of 545 figural graffiti were analysed to determine conformity to these 'rules' and the presence of these patterns in much the same way one would look for stylistic elements in vase paintings to identify a particular painter or school; 161 were concluded to have been the work of children (see further Huntley, in progress).

Other Criteria for Identifying Children's Graffiti

Apart from the developmental psychology approach which I am proposing, other criteria, notably the height at which a graffito appears on the wall, have often been considered useful for identifying children's hands (Mau 1899: 482; García y García 2005: 37; Beard 2008: 15). This idea derives from popular perceptions of children's abilities that assume they

will produce graffiti at a low height on the wall. There is of course logic in this thinking: children are shorter than adults. Nevertheless from a young age they are able to climb on furniture allowing them to draw higher up on the wall than their diminutive stature might otherwise allow. Furthermore, an adult is quite capable of crouching down to inscribe something on a wall, as García y García notes (2005: 37; see also Benefiel, this volume). There are also technical problems complicating the relevance of height as a criterion for identifying children's graffiti. Even though I have only considered graffiti which are either *in situ* or recorded with their spatial contexts preserved, in many cases the height of a graffito from the ground was not recorded. Often graffiti no longer survive to permit measurements to be taken. In fact, for the data set in this study, nearly 20 per cent lacked any record of height and are either no longer extant *in situ* or not accessible.

Although height is not taken directly into account as a criterion in the process of identification of children's graffiti, the heights of the graffiti have been analysed after identification. Of the positively identified graffiti with recorded height data (128 examples), 20 per cent were located no higher than 0.55 m on the wall and 75 per cent were located no higher than 1.1 m. There is certainly a correlation, therefore, between height and the identification of graffiti as children's, which might be seen as a check on the developmental psychological approach. Langner (2001: 143) suggests that most graffiti was drawn at eye level; 1.1 m or less would be at approximate eye level for young children.

The Limitations of a Developmental Psychological Approach: The Ages of Children

The different types of representation (and heights on the wall where these are found) can raise questions about the ages of the children who were producing the graffiti, but this is difficult to pin down with any precision. The age of two is generally when modern children were found to have begun scribbling, though some do so at a younger age (Kellogg 1969: 14). While Malchiodi, (1998), Cox (1992), Di Leo (1970) and Kellogg (1969) attribute developmental stages with age groups, these designations are variable depending on socio-cultural circumstances, which have an affect on the rate of representational development. It seems that children will develop faster the more they are encouraged to draw and the more instruction they receive. Hence a study of Japanese children who were taught to draw in school showed an increase in the speed of their development, sometimes by several years (Alland 1983: 203). Despite the difference in the rate of development, the children still progress through the same stages, draw using the same 'rules', and create visual representations exhibiting the same patterns.

It is difficult to know the rate of cognitive development in Roman children. There is little evidence, historical or archaeological, regarding the extent to which children in the Roman world were encouraged to draw or

whether they received any instruction on how to do it as part of either formal or informal education, although Marcus Cornelius Fronto remarked in a letter that he gave his young grandson writing paper and tablets (*Ep.* 1.12). This does provide evidence that privileged children, at least, had access to writing or drawing materials, but it is difficult to extrapolate this to the wider population of children, particularly the poor or servile. Fronto's remark also does not reveal whether children were given instruction in drawing (as opposed to the materials needed to draw), though it is not out of the realm of possibility. Careers such as painting and architecture would have required abilities in draughtsmanship and visual representation, so parents, caretakers, tutors or owners may have wanted to foster such skills. Nevertheless, gauging the particular rate of development of Roman children is problematic with such scant evidence.

For this reason no attempt has been made here to place the children's graffiti into age groups associated with particular stages of development. Generally, it seems that the children whose graffiti is identifiable as such were below the age of 12 (though this in itself is an approximation). Culturally, the age of 12 is relevant because historical and archaeological evidence suggests that age marks the beginning of a transition period for children. With regards to Roman citizens, girls would legally have been allowed to marry at this age and boys would have been preparing to enter public life (they took up the *toga virilis* between the ages of 14 and 16). Bradley (1991: 111) has also suggested that children learning a trade would have been placed in apprenticeships during their early teens.

The Graffiti of Ancient Campanian Children

Examination of the Campanian figural graffiti according to the criteria of developmental psychology outlined above suggests some important conclusions. In terms of subject matter, there were no notable differences between the children's graffiti and the rest of the graffiti in the data set. Overall, the most popular subject matter for children's graffiti seem to have been animal figures (37.9 per cent) and objects, namely ships, boats and gladiatorial accoutrements (38.5 per cent). Human figures were also fairly common (23.6 per cent) and some graffiti featured both human and animal figures. These are, of course, common subjects of graffiti in general. Some of the children's graffiti featuring human figures portrayed gladiators or hunters, others depicted simple static figures. This may suggest children's presence at gladiatorial combat and hunting activities.

The large number of animals in the sample may reflect the fact that some childhood activities involved animals. It appears that children often chose to depict birds, cervine and equine creatures, and some ambiguous quadrupeds, and it is likely that children had a high degree of contact with animals in day-to-day activities (Bradley 1998). The Romans may have viewed birds in particular as an appropriate pet or responsibility for a young child: a

letter of Pliny the Younger recorded the action of a senator in mourning for his recently deceased young son that included the sacrifice of the boy's pet birds (Plin. *Ep.* 4.2). Sorabella (2007) has argued, based on iconography, that lizards were another animal that may have been given to children as pets; perhaps some of the ambiguous beasts in the graffiti were meant to represent lizards.

It is worth noting that the subject matter of children's drawings is not always recognisable to adults.³ This is true of much graffiti as well, and the subject of 'crude' depictions can often be difficult to discern; the result is that 22.9 per cent of the children's graffiti have to be categorised as 'abstract' because they appear to be neither recognisable objects or figures nor clear geometric objects or patterns.⁴

The Distribution of Children's Graffiti

Comparison of the distribution of possible children's graffiti throughout the urban environment is also productive. Domestic spaces were the location of over 40 per cent of this material (66 out of 161 instances). These were found in 20 separate properties, including both of the Stabian villas, two houses in Herculaneum and 16 homes in Pompeii (Table 4.2 page 84). The remaining 95 graffiti (59 per cent) were found on outer walls and in various spaces that were non-domestic, including areas devoted to work, leisure and other social activities. It is worth emphasising this division between domestic and non-domestic spaces because children are traditionally thought to have spent the majority of their time within domestic areas. Roman children are, for example, primarily discussed in connection with the home and the family (Bradley 1991; Dixon 1992; Gardner 1998; Rawson and Weaver 1999; Harlow and Laurence 2002).⁵ The graffiti are archaeological evidence of children's presence and activities in other locations outside of the home and are, therefore, worth detailed and separate exploration.

DOMESTIC SPACES

I begin, however, with the presence of children in domestic spaces. The graffiti supports the idea that there was a lack of separate spaces for children, as Allison (2004) and Wallace-Hadrill (1994) have argued; children's graffiti were found in almost all different types of rooms, with the exception of atria/front halls, kitchens, and tablina/open rooms opposite main entrances (see Table 4.1).

The rooms which lack children's graffiti were not necessarily off limits to children, as virtually no figural graffiti were found at all in these rooms (though written/verbal graffiti were not uncommon: compare Benefiel, this volume, for graffiti in the House of the Four Styles). Rather than the absence of children, it might have been that there were different social expectations

Table 4.1 Distribution of Children's Graffiti by Room Type. Room Type Descriptions from Allison 2004

Room Types in 'Private' Houses	Number of Graffiti	Percentage of Total
Gardens and ambulatories (<i>peristyla</i>)	10	15.2
Large rooms off corners of front halls (<i>triclinia</i>)	1	1.51
Large open rooms off gardens (<i>oeci</i>)	7	10.6
Small rooms off front halls (<i>cubiculi</i>)	20	30.3
Medium rooms/wings off the sides of front halls (<i>alae</i>)	9	13.6
Front halls (<i>atria</i>)	-	-
Entranceways (<i>fauces</i>)	7	10.6
Rooms associated with cooking (<i>culinae</i>)	-	-
Open rooms opposite main entrances (<i>tablina</i>)	-	-
Other rooms and corridors	11	16.7

for behaviour in such spaces. For instance, cooking areas, which had no children's graffiti, were primarily set aside as work spaces. Soot and other by-products of cooking may have provided a more preferable or convenient medium for drawing, albeit a less permanent one. It is more likely however that expectations to work, help and learn may have been higher in these rooms, inhibiting the opportunities to engage in drawing.

The same was likely true for the atria/front halls as it was for kitchens. There were no examples of children's graffiti in these spaces. Overall there are few figural graffiti in Pompeian atria (Langner 2001), though verbal graffiti are not uncommon here (Cooley and Cooley 2004: 77). While Roman literature and modern scholarship have both stressed the ceremonial functions of the atrium for the meeting of clients and guests and the placement of household shrines to the *lares*, Allison's study of Pompeian household assemblages has shown it had much more mundane functions as well, and may have been the place for activities such as weaving (Allison 2004: 69). In a study of the *Casa di M. Epidius Primus* in Pompeii, Berry noted that while tools associated with some unknown craft were distributed throughout the house, there were a prominent number found in the atrium, reinforcing the idea of this as a work space (Berry 1997: 193). Therefore, there might have been strict social expectations for children to work and learn in this space as well. As mentioned above a few Latin authors mention the atrium as the site of child's play (Verg. *Aen.* 7.379; Lucr. 4.401), but perhaps only certain play activities were permitted in this space. In contrast, a large portion of children's graffiti, over 50 per cent (see Table 4.1), are associated with the rooms and wings off front halls, which may indicate that these spaces offered young children the privacy to carry

out their drawing away from the watchful eyes of adults or older children who were supervising them. For instance in the *Casa del Gran Portale* in Herculaneum, graffiti were drawn on the lower part of a wall below a window facing the courtyard in an obscured wing off the main hall (Figure 4.2). The irregular plan of the house reduced visibility in the many corners and alcoves it creates.

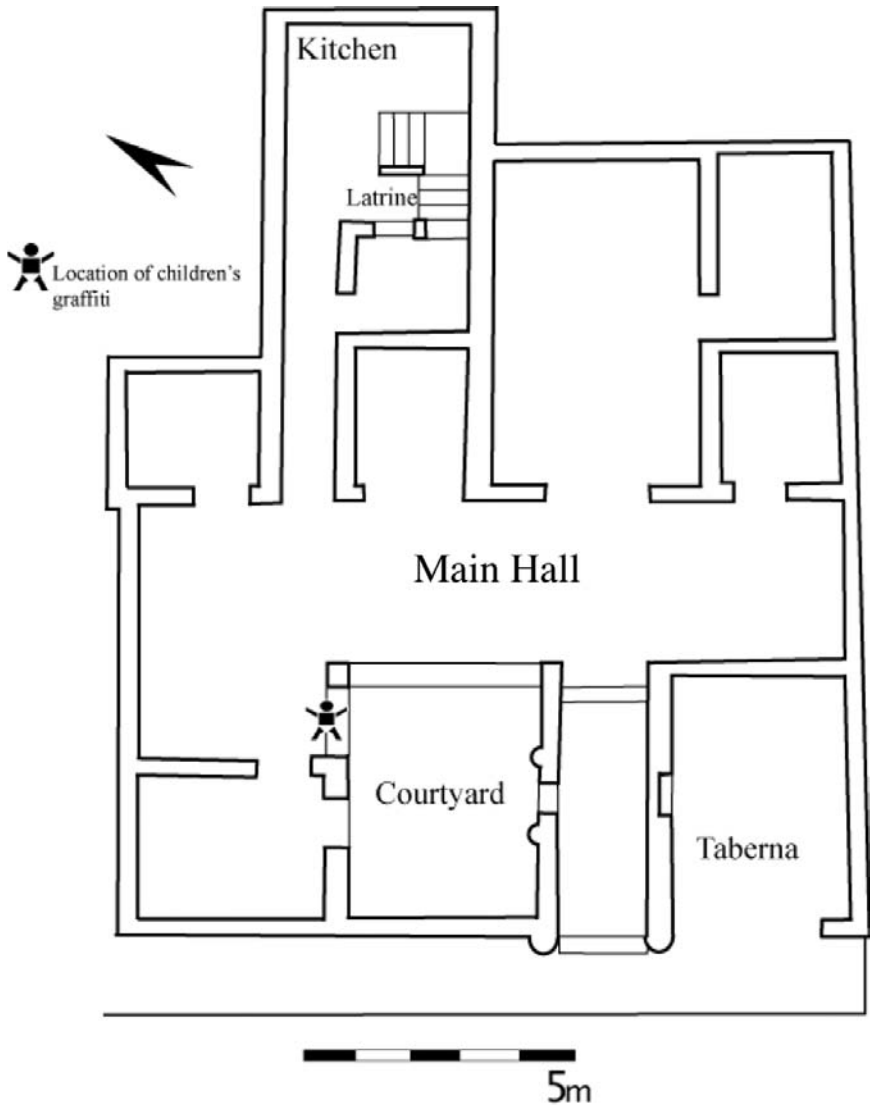


Figure 4.2 Plan of the *Casa del Gran Portale*, Herculaneum. Plan by author after Maiuri 1958.

In comparison with the location of Pompeian figural graffiti in general, children's graffiti is differently distributed throughout the house. Almost a third of Pompeian figural graffiti were found in gardens or peristyles (Langner 2001), but the percentage of children's graffiti found in these spaces was half that.⁶ Only 20 per cent of Pompeian figural graffiti were found in front halls or the rooms and wings around them (Langner 2001; cf. Benefiel, this volume); compare this with children's graffiti, of which almost 44 per cent were found in rooms and spaces adjoining the front halls.

In the *Casa della Caccia Antica* (VII.4.48) in Pompeii, an animal was drawn along a side corridor between the front hall and the garden peristyle (Figure 4.3). The corridor, which runs from the east side of the atrium back to the hallway leads along one side of the courtyard; the entrances to the passage from both the atrium and the courtyard are located unobtrusively in the corners. It was one of three paths which allowed access to the peristyle from the front hall. A far more visually impressive entrance to the garden courtyard from the atrium was through a large open room (Descœudres 1987: 137). Access to the peristyle could also be gained by passing through a room decorated with satyrs and maenads on the west side of the house. The hallway with the graffiti had plain white lime flooring and painted stucco. There may also have been a painting, which no longer survives, in the hallway, but this is unlikely (Allison and Sear 2002: 24). The passage seems to



Figure 4.3 Side corridor leading to the peristyle and 'oecus' in the *Casa della Caccia Antica* (VII.4.48). Photo by author.

have been primarily utilitarian, serving as a thoroughfare for slaves, guests or family members. It is significant that the graffiti's location is in a hallway, a space traditionally designed to be a place for people to pass through from one room to another. In the *Casa della Caccia Antica*, one might argue, this space was used, at least for a short time, by a child or children for a different type of activity. The presence of graffiti here may suggest that children were allowed a good deal of movement within houses and had a certain amount of freedom to manipulate important spaces for their own purposes.

Within domestic contexts it seemed that children preferred, or at least had access to, closed spaces to engage in drawing on walls. This may indicate different expectations for activities in different rooms. It may also be that drawing on walls could be done away from the prying eyes of guardians, who might have disapproved of such activities. Historical evidence suggests that young children would have had at least a moderate amount of supervision. The individual who fulfilled the role of supervisor must have varied somewhat depending on situation and socio-economic status. In wealthy households, *nutrices* and *paedagogi* would have looked after and taught children (George 1999: 317). Nurses would have been with young children constantly, comforting and entertaining them, even sleeping nearby (Rawson 2003: 126). The passage from Quintillian (*Inst.* I.1.20) mentioned above advocated letting children play and ensuring that learning was made amusing, but did not specify any particular amount of supervision.

Roman literature does provide some information about the roles of parents in the care of young children. There is no image in Roman texts of the indulgent, doting mother in opposition to the stern father, a common motif in modern western culture (Dixon 1990: 111). Dixon argues that literary evidence depicts the roles of mothers and fathers in the care of young children as being quite similar. Writers such as Quintillian, Cicero and Aulus Gellius seem to have been attentive fathers, who were involved in the lives of their children (Dixon 1990: 111). Saller estimates that around one-third of children lost their fathers before they reached puberty because of the late age of marriage for men and high mortality (1994: 189). Mortality, divorce or socio-economic status may have affected the presence of the traditional caretakers, parents and nurses. Thus the care of young children may have fallen to older peers, step-parents, distant relatives or other members of the *familia* (Rawson 2003: 132).

NON-DOMESTIC LOCATIONS

Although domestic space is important, the majority of children's graffiti was found outside of domestic contexts; instead they appear in a few major public facilities or along outer walls (Table 4.2). Only a handful were found inside workshops, taverns or other spaces used primarily for work, production or business.

Table 4.2 The Location of Children's Graffiti in Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas San Marco and Arianna

<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Graffiti</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
Outer walls and ramps	22	13.7
Domestic buildings	66	40.9
Theatre and theatre corridor	42	26.1
Grand Palaestra	17	10.6
Bath complexes	12	7.5
Production and work areas	2	1.2
Other buildings	1	0.6

The public facilities where children's graffiti are found in Pompeii were the theatre corridor, the Grand Palaestra, and two bath complexes, and in Herculaneum in one bath complex. The theatre corridor (VIII.7.20) has the largest percentage of children's graffiti found in a single location and may have functioned in a similar way to the rooms off the atria in domestic buildings, offering a secluded space for play. Children may have made use of this space on the way to, or from, a performance in the large theatre, or perhaps even during a performance which did not hold their attention to the fullest. These activities did not necessarily have to occur when a production was being performed in the theatres. With its placement close to the Stabian gate, the corridor might have offered a shaded stopping place for groups of people entering the city. Children within those groups would have had the opportunity to draw (and older children and adults with them). The children's graffiti were also fairly evenly distributed through the passage, the walls of which are literally covered in graffiti that are almost exclusively figural.

In the case of the Grand Palaestra (II.7), however, there was a particular area where children's graffiti seemed to be more frequent. In the South Portico 12 instances of children's graffiti can be identified, 10 of which were scratched into the area between the 26th and 33rd columns. An inscription above one of the entrances commemorates the association of the *palaestra* with the *Iuventus*, a social club made up of the male youth in the city who may have used it for sporting and military training (García y García 2005: 164; Ling 2007: 123). Whatever its use, the presence of children's graffiti suggests some sort of sectioning of the *palaestra* either for young children or for play activities. On the eastern wall were a number of abecedaria (Maiuri 1939: 177; see also Della Corte 1939), which have been associated with formal learning activities of either adults or children (although other possibilities have been suggested above, page 71). This could possibly

suggest an area of the Grand Palaestra dedicated to learning and a division of formal learning from play (for similar 'learning environments' see the ephebeion in Priene, or the fourth-century CE house at Trimithis: *IPriene* 313; Criatore et al. 2008).

On the other hand, the space may have been seen as an appropriate area for play. Welch suggested that the *Iuventus* used the Grand Palaestra for staging mock gladiator fights and beast hunts, so the space might have already been one associated with socio-dramatic play (Welch 2007: 98). While it would be wrong to assume children were away from peers when they were in domestic buildings, certainly the Grand Palaestra would have offered them the opportunity to interact with a larger, extended group of peers. Here, younger children (presumably male) could have interacted with older children, who could have served as role models. Younger children certainly seem to be present here: Richardson (1988: 211) argued that the pool in the middle of the complex has an odd profile if it was indeed used for swimming; one end was very shallow and there was gentle slope downwards towards the other end. Perhaps this design made it a good pool to instruct young children in swimming.

There are many aspects of the Grand Palaestra that are not completely understood. While it may have been an area used for sports and exercise, no discernable tracks or trappings associated with athletics have been found (Richardson 1988: 214). In all likelihood the Grand Palaestra had a wide range of uses. It may have been the location of a market for local and visiting merchants, although the absence of access for vehicles casts some doubt on this (Richardson 1988: 214). It was probably used heavily during festivals, where it provided shelter, sanitary facilities and concession stands for celebrants, while on a day-to-day basis it served as an urban park and a place for meetings and more casual socialising (Parslow 2007: 217). For children it would have allowed them to socialise with a larger group of peers. This may also have included children visiting Pompeii from other towns or settlements. A decree banning gladiatorial games after a fight broke out between Pompeians and Nuceria in 59 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 14.17) attests that non-Pompeians visited the city in significant numbers for particular occasions. It is not inconceivable that they would have brought young children along.

Children's graffiti were also found at two bath complexes in Pompeii, the Stabian baths (VII.1.8), the baths of the Praedia Iulia Felix (II.4.6), and in the Forum baths of Herculaneum (VI.8). In the Stabian baths, two were found in the so-called 'women's *apodyterium*' (Eschbach 1979: 17) and one in the palaestra (*CIL* 4.2089). At the Praedia Iulia Felix, they were found in the atrium area. There is historical evidence for young children visiting the baths. Ancient schoolbooks detailed the processes of bathing, though most of these date to the third century or later (Dionisotti 1982). A couple in Rome set up an inscription to commemorate their eight-year-old child who had drowned in the baths of Mars (Fagan

2002: 197). In changing rooms, slaves could be hired to watch over bathers' possessions (Fagan 2002: 38). The drawings could have perhaps been the creations of slave children as they performed this task. The lack of graffiti within the actual baths may indicate that behaviour was strongly directed to bathing or play associated with bathing. The process of bathing was considerably important as a social activity and also for reasons related to medicine and hygiene (Fagan 2002: 85), and because of the significance of these social and hygienic aspects, there may have been more stringent social expectations for the way children behaved in the bathing rooms.

Very few children's graffiti were found in workshops or buildings devoted to business, such as taverns or guesthouses. These were places often with a lot of graffiti, particularly ones related to love and sex (DeFelice 2007: 477). Treated in literature as places of ill-repute (Sen. *De vita beata* 7.3), they offered patrons food, drink, sex and a place to socialise or sleep, and as such may have been places in which young children were less likely to be. This may have been because these places were not considered appropriate for young children or perhaps young children were not wanted here. Laurence (1994) and Wallace-Hadrill (1995) argue that there may have been moral zoning in Pompeii, which would have determined where bars and other establishments catering to 'deviant behaviour' (as Laurence 1994: 70 calls it), namely gambling, prostitution and excessive drinking, were located (this is disputed by Ellis 2004; McGinn 2002). If children were present in these establishments, the hustle and bustle of shops and bars may have kept them occupied in observation or in different types of activities. It is also possible that there were different expectations for their behaviour or that they may have been working within these establishments. A wall painting in an inn at IV.10.1 shows what may be a young boy serving patrons seated around a table (Tanzer 1939: 48). It is uncertain, however, whether the boy is a teen or younger. In the few taverns and guesthouses where children do seem to have been present based on the graffiti evidence, there may have been more lax social expectations.

Places such as bath houses, bars, shops and various workshops may have had more stringent social expectations or were the location of situations that stimulated a high level of attention for children. If children were present at workshops and production areas, they are likely to have been engaged at work, thereby affording them fewer opportunities to create graffiti. This may have been similar to the situation in domestic spaces, such as kitchens and front halls, where work and ceremony may have created more stringent expectation for behaviour. Though children's presence in workshops may have been uncommon, apprenticeships probably began when individuals were in their early teens (Bradley 1991). A Pompeian fresco shows fullers at work rinsing garments in vats (Tanzer 1939: 10). Three of these workers are diminutive in size and possibly are children, though they could also be teens or adult slaves.

A large percentage of the children's graffiti (13.7 per cent) were found on exterior walls of buildings throughout the city (Table 4.2). The presence of graffiti in these locations suggests that children were allowed outside controlled spaces, either with accompaniment or on their own. Some of the graffiti were found along major roads, for example, the outer wall of the *Termopolio dell'Aselline* (IX.11.2–3), which lies along the *Via dell'Abbondanza*, one of the main thoroughfares through Pompeii. Others are found on walls along small streets and alleyways, such as a graffito outside the property at I.13.9, which is located on a small street off of the *Via dell'Abbondanza*. Many were present near the entrances to houses, suggesting either that young children had the opportunity to venture outside in the immediate vicinity of their homes or that they waited outside homes while their companions conducted visits within. Moreover, shops and workshops often operated in parts of domestic buildings (Pirson 2007: 457), so they may have been present for business transactions as well. Similarly, graffiti were found outside taverns and guesthouses.

CONCLUSIONS

The activities of Roman children were not random and they can be accessed through the archaeological record. Developmental psychology can assist archaeologists in understanding children's behavioural patterns so that they might be recognised archaeologically in graffiti. Figural graffiti can provide evidence of young children's activities and where those activities took place. By looking at location patterns, some conclusions may be drawn about spatial allocation of certain behaviours and social expectations that affect these behaviours.

The graffiti presented here seem to corroborate past assertions that there were no specific areas of Roman houses dedicated solely to children, since children's graffiti were found in all types of rooms, with the exception of the atria/front halls, the kitchens and the tablina. This is an overall pattern that has been observed, though individual households may have organised space differently. The lack of figural graffiti in these three room types does not, however, preclude the presence of children in these spaces. It simply suggests that there were different social expectations for acceptable activities in those rooms. The presence of the figural graffiti would seem to indicate the permission or at least the achievement of play in the absence of work. Areas such as the atrium and kitchen were places of work and thus the expectation may have been for young children to focus on work in these spaces as well, or at least not play in them.

Graffiti also attest to the presence of young children in non-domestic locations. Children's graffiti appear at several large public facilities, namely the theatre corridor, the Grand Palaestra and the Stabian baths as well as on outer walls of buildings throughout the city. Only a small number

were found in places devoted primarily to work or business, such as taverns, workshops and guesthouses (and these are usually found outside these establishments). This reinforces the idea of different social expectations for children in places devoted predominantly to work.

Although it is possible to suggest that children comprised a significant proportion of graffiti-producers in Pompeii and Herculaneum, there remain a number of unanswered questions. First, these graffiti do not attest to the socio-economic status of the children who drew them. In virtually all of the locations children's graffiti were found, there may have been children from a variety of different backgrounds present. Secondly, these graffiti do not inform us about the exact age of the children who drew them. This is because the rate of development is affected by socio-cultural attitudes towards drawing; children given encouragement and instruction in drawing will move through the stages of development at a faster rate. Moreover, while the stages of development can be neatly divided in theoretical terms, children often vacillate between different stages which makes attributing children's ages to the drawings impossible (Malchiodi 1998: 65). Thirdly, there is no way to tell the gender of the child creating graffiti, so it is difficult to know whether this affected social expectations for the types of behaviour outlined here, or whether this affected where children's activities were taking place. It is also not known how children's days were organised temporally, either by the children themselves or by external factors.

Nevertheless, the graffiti provide a way of assessing the spatial distribution of children's activities and the social expectations which shaped their behaviour by focussing on children as authors rather than on childhood as a concept. The ability to identify children's contributions as active participants in the material world is a challenge archaeologists will continue to face. But it is important to emphasise that children behave in patterned, recognisable ways and developmental psychology can aid archaeologists in understanding these behavioural patterns. This, in turn, allows more dynamic questions to be asked about children's lives in the Roman world. The graffiti discussed here provide at least a glimpse of the location of these activities and interactions, and can thus help to account for the presence of children and their activities when analysing deposits and assemblages. When studying ancient graffiti, we might now easily imagine marks made by the hand of a child.

NOTES

1. For the full scope of how children were defined as a social group see Rawson (2003) and Harlow and Laurence (2002), who cover this topic thoroughly.
2. Langner (2001) identified 831 instances of figural graffiti in Pompeii alone. In this count he included all those found *in situ*, recorded in publications and identified in reports, even if only in passing mention. *CIL* 4 and *PPM* also compile many of the figural graffiti from Pompeii and Herculaneum

alongside the verbal graffiti. Langner (2001) and Vivolo (1993) are two of the few studies to deal specifically with figural graffiti, though their focus has been more on typological issues than sociological ones (Langner did, however, examine the distribution of the figural graffiti from Pompeii based on the type of graffiti and its location). Varone (1999) and Tinh (1988) included the figural graffiti in their studies of the *Villa San Marco* and the *Casa dei Cervi* respectively.

3. Developmental psychologists have stressed that it is actually important never to ask a child what he or she is drawing (Cox 1992: 72).
4. The totals add up to more than 100 per cent because some graffiti belong to more than one category, e.g., a graffito may include both an animal and a human figure.
5. Notable exceptions to this trend include work by Bradley (1991), who deals with child labour and apprenticeships, Mantle (2002) on the role of children in public religious activities, García y García (2005) on education, and Rawson (2003) who considers children's experience of urban life. Furthermore, there are a large number of studies of burial, which consider children's place within the wider community (see, for example, McWilliam 2001).
6. The searchable CD-rom database supplied with the printed edition allows such data to be derived.

5 Graffiti and the Epigraphic Habit

Creating Communities and Writing Alternate Histories in Classical Attica*

Claire Taylor

The epigraphic habit, that is, the cultural impulse to record information on stone and other durable materials, is an important feature of the ancient Mediterranean world (MacMullen 1982). In Attica, this habit is particularly pronounced; inscriptions here were increasingly common from the seventh century BCE onwards and are found frequently until the third century CE, peaking in the fourth century (Stoddart and Whitley 1988: 764; Hedrick 1999: 392, Fig. 2). Epigraphic writing in Attica encompasses a wide range of activities: dedications, funerary inscriptions, laws, decrees, temple accounts, sacred calendars, various lists (of officials, war dead, debtors etc), commercial transactions and ownership marks all appear inscribed on stone at different frequencies throughout the centuries.

Because the Athenian state produced a large number of inscriptions, it has been tempting to equate the epigraphic habit in Attica with political activity of various kinds, and, given the relatively large numbers of inscriptions set up in the late fifth and fourth centuries, debate has been framed by whether or not this was shaped in any part by democratic ideology (Meyer 1993; Hedrick 1999; Oliver 2003; Sickinger 2009). In fact, as the list above suggests, 'public' inscriptions account for only a small proportion of Attic epigraphy; therefore in order to understand why there is so much visible writing in Attica (particularly in the fourth century), we need to consider other, cultural, factors (for a similar argument see Osborne 2009).

One way in which we can see the extent, and character, of this epigraphic habit is in the rock-cut graffiti which appear throughout the Attic countryside. The fact that these are carved into the rock, in some cases on seemingly remote hillsides, emphasises that inscribing things on stone was an activity certainly not solely connected with the state but a much more culturally widespread practice (see also Oliver 2000). But it is only in the past generation or so that archaeologists have noticed (and recorded) these inscriptions. The material is plentiful, and increasingly being recognised, but it is not always obvious how these markings should be interpreted.

The most well-documented are the *horoi* (boundary markers), single word texts which appear to designate borders of property or demes (Ober

1981; Stanton 1984; Langdon 1999). Difficult to date precisely, most of these are thought to have been made either in the late fourth or third centuries, or during the Roman period. But this is not the only material which has been found. In fact there is a wide variety of different types of rock-cut markings from across Attica: grave markers, pictures of ships, hoplites, horses and dogs, personal names, salutations of shepherds, an abecadarium (Wickens 1983; Langdon 1991; Langdon and van de Moortel 2000; Langdon 2005), as well as *kalos* names (i.e. laudatory texts which describe the beauty of a person), depictions of genitalia, and footprints (Langdon 1985b). Aside from the *horoi* (Ober 1995), most of these items have rarely been discussed outside the context of their initial publication and little thought has been given to the circumstances behind their creation, function or reception (ancient or modern). Equally, there has been limited discussion

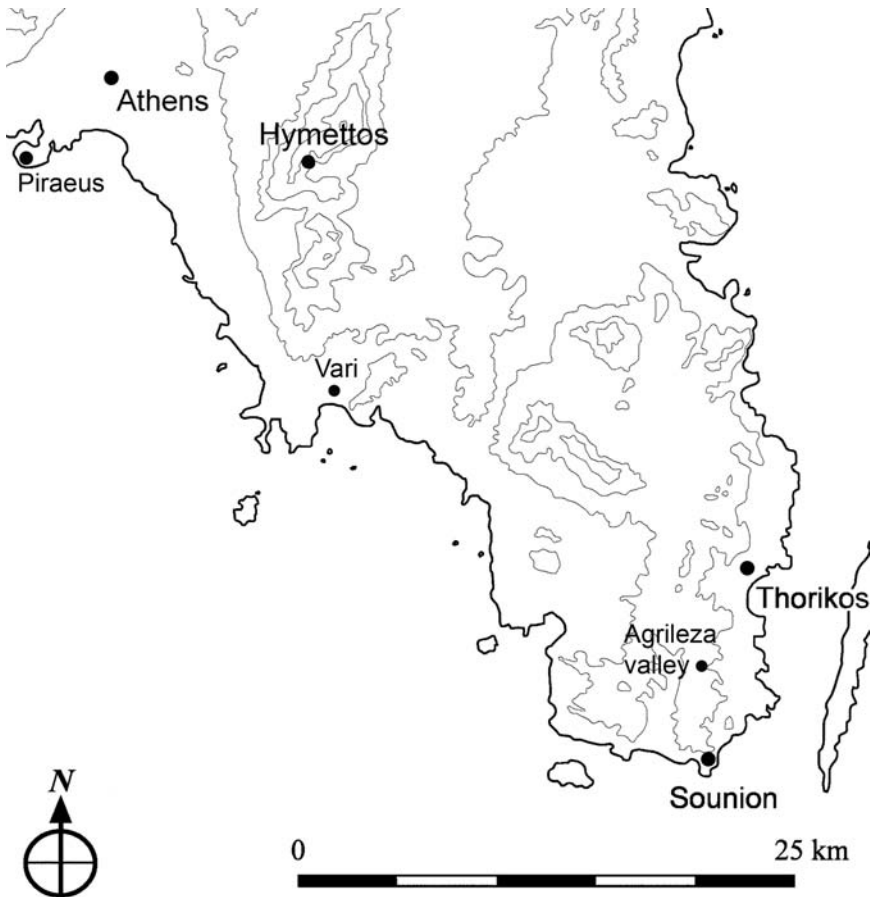


Figure 5.1 Map of southern Attica.

of *how* this material can be interpreted and minimal interrogation of the categorisations we create when examining this evidence.

The aim of this chapter is therefore twofold. First I want to examine, in depth, a selection of this Attic material (namely the ‘erotic’ graffiti which appears on Hymettos and in the deme of Thorikos: Figure 5.1) in order to draw some conclusions about how it can be used as evidence, and what it can be used as evidence for. This in itself is an interpretative strategy which, with due adjustments for context, may be applied to other forms of graffiti in Attica and elsewhere. Indeed, I will argue throughout that contextualising this material is key to understanding its function and meaning. Secondly, I want to problematise the category of ‘graffiti’ itself, and it is here where I shall begin.

CATEGORIES AND CONTEXTS

The reason for choosing a portion of the rock-cut graffiti—rather than examining it all—is that the ‘corpus’ (such as there is one) is a modern construction and arguably does not form a coherent category of material. This is important because the categories we chose affect our interpretations, and these, in turn, are shaped not only by the vagaries of preservation and survival but also by difficulties in recognition (some of these markings are far from easy to see) as well as recording practices which encourage the grouping together of certain types of material.

The problem can be seen clearly in the use of terminology: should we think of these rock-cut markings as ‘graffiti’ or ‘inscriptions’? Are they similar to, or different from, the numerous (now lost), painted messages which once appeared on walls and doors of buildings in Athens?¹ The introductory chapter to this volume has discussed some of the problems associated with defining ‘graffiti’, and as demonstrated there, and in the chapters by both Baird and Mairs, the use of the term (and description of material) by archaeologists and historians has been extraordinarily varied. The publication of the Thorikos material (which will be discussed in detail below) is a case in point. Here different terms are used to describe this material in different volumes of the publication. In volume IX of the preliminary reports, some of these markings (*SEG* 34.43, 198: Mussche et al. 1990: 182–5) are described as ‘*graffite*’, but they are not mentioned in the final report on graffiti; here it is only markings on pots which are meant (Vanhove 2006). In the intervening 15 years between initial publication and final report, this material seems to have been re-categorised, at least in the minds of the Belgian team (as well as the *SEG* editors), as ‘*inscriptions rupestre*’ (as indeed it is described in volume VIII of the preliminary reports: Mussche et al. 1984: 150–1).

Does this matter? Yes, because it encourages us to view the material in a particular way; in the case of Thorikos we are encouraged to view

the ‘rupestral inscriptions’ (which include sexual insults and appear in the context of a street) as similar to, for example, a rock-cut dedication in the Vari cave (*IG I³ 974*: Schörner and Goette 2004: 55–6, no. 10) or a grave marker on the Cliff farm (*SEG 32.313*: Waelkens 1982; Wickens 1983), but aside from the fact that they are all cut into the rock, this is a difficult comparison to sustain. These disparate markings were made in different places at different times for different purposes. The implication of designating all of this material as ‘inscriptions’, rather than ‘graffiti’, is that its status is elevated from mere scratchings made by ‘idlers’ to something of perceived scholarly value (proper epigraphy, eventually published in Latin in *IG*), but the nature of epigraphic publication also encourages the text to be divorced from the accompanying image and de-contextualised from the place in which it appears (see, for example, the entries which are now *IG I³ 1405 bis-quater*, here Figure 5.2, discussed in more detail below: the richness of the visual imagery is lost when the focus is on the text alone). Neither of the terms are entirely neutral.

Terminology aside, there are also problems with bringing together material of very different date, location or function *just because* they happen to have been inscribed on the rock. This is especially the case in fifth- and fourth-century Attica, a society in which writing—and writing on stone—was exceedingly common. Of course, if our focus is the activity of production, to view all these rock-cut markings as one entity is entirely valid, but if we are interested in asking further questions (why do these specific clusters of texts and images appear together in these places? What meanings do they have? What functions do they serve? Who was supposed to read or see these inscriptions? Who produced them and why?), we must recognise the slipperiness of our categories, and the consequences of this. Arbitrary categories within this material can all too easily be drawn.

Indeed, it may be that my focus here simply creates a new, and equally arbitrary, category in its own right. But there are grounds for my choice of case study which, as mentioned above, focuses on the ‘erotic’ texts and images that appear on Hymettos and in Thorikos. In terms of content and location, this material arguably does form a coherent conceptual group distinct from other rock-cut examples, as will become clear throughout the chapter. This approach aims in part therefore to develop an interpretation of this material which is specific to *this* group of texts and images. In doing so I will highlight points of contact with other rock-cut graffiti/inscriptions in Attica, but I also want to emphasise that there is no overarching way in which to interpret all of these markings as one group. Contextualisation is key.

COMMEMORATION

The material which forms our case study then is the ‘erotic’ texts and images dating to the classical period which are found carved into the rock in two

main clusters in Attica: on Hymettos and in the deme of Thorikos (Figure 5.1).² In both places there are *kalos* names, and for the most part, these are found close to individual personal names, footprints (sometimes themselves named), and often depictions of genitalia (Hymettos: IG I³ 1405 bis-quater (Figure 5.2); Thorikos: SEG 34.198, 40.262–4, Mussche 1998: 39; Langer 2001: no. 1280).³ Sometimes these *kalos* names are laudatory (IG I³ 1405 bis: Deinias *kalos*);⁴ sometimes these have an insulting twist (SEG 34.198: ‘Chares is a fine whore’ (*pornos kalos*); Langdon 2004: ‘Aithonides is beautiful (*kalos*) [and] willingly takes it up the arse’ (*hekon katapugon*).⁵ The clusters we find, therefore, are sexualised texts and images.

Why were they produced; and why do they appear in these places (a deme site and a seemingly remote mountainside)? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the act of inscribing and its commemorative value. The practice of making one’s mark, whether that is writing a *kalos* inscription or a personal name, or drawing a phallus or a footprint, creates a link between the text/image and the individual as inscriber. Writing a name memorialises the presence of a person in a certain area; indeed the language of memorialisation is sometimes used in the Attic material, for example, that recently discovered on the Barako hill outside Vari: ‘I am

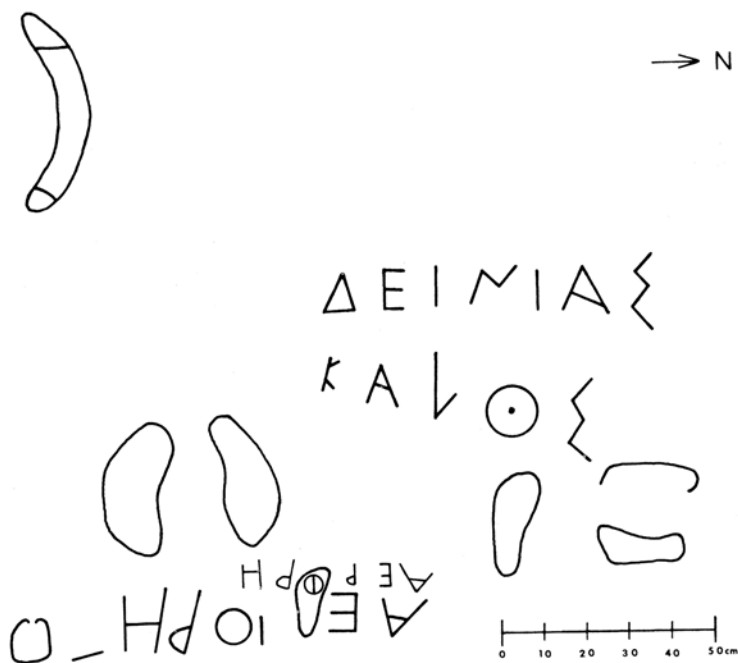


Figure 5.2 Rock-cut graffiti on Hymettos (IG I³ 1405 bis-quater). Reproduced from M. Langdon 1985b, courtesy of the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

the memorial (*mnema*) of [-]sthines the shepherd' ([-]*sthino eimi mnema poimai[nontos]*).⁶ In the same way a simple name links an individual person to that location—Kreon presumably had some kind of connection to Thorikos (*SEG* 40.262)—even if only temporarily, or indirectly through another person.⁷

This form of memorialisation situates the individual within a place at a moment in time, but also situates them within a group of people or a community. We can see this process most clearly on fifth-century war memorials which list deceased soldiers or fourth-century gravestones which detail family and deme connections (compare *IG* I³ 1147 with *SEG* 23.161). In these examples naming individuals demonstrates their citizen or family status, or their role as a defender of the polis (Meyer 1993; Low et al. 2010). But this is also true of more 'informal' texts too, such as the travellers' graffiti which appears on ancient monuments: Lord Byron's name on the temple of Poseidon at Sounion is perhaps the most famous example, though this practice was not unknown in antiquity (*IG* II² 13232 records the name Onesimos which appears on the same temple).⁸ The community in which a person is situated may be large or small (Athenians in general or a specific family), temporary or permanent (travellers or fallen soldiers), but the act of naming is inherently socially connective, over time and space.

What's more, the social identities ascribed to the name may be multi-faceted and variable. Readers of modern graffiti may see the writers of name-tags as 'vandals' or 'anti-social', but the writers do not necessarily view themselves in this way. Instead writing one's name is a way in which to connect with others within a graffiti- or epigraphic-culture and negotiate status within that community (Macdonald 2002). It has multiple meanings for different audiences; one might read suggestions of conflicting values here—our sexual insults, for example, may hint at hierarchies of power (see Chaniotis page 204–5), but each individual response, likewise, situates a person within—or outside—a group. We can see this clearly in modern reactions to name-writing on ancient structures: Carpenter and Boyd, for example (1977: 192), note the names of Fauvel and Milchhöfer carved into ancient remains on Hymettos in 1789 and 1880 respectively, but they are not interested in recording the content of the later, twentieth-century, graffiti 'written with black marker' at the same site.⁹ Presumably they want to emphasise the connection between themselves (or rather the scholarly community at large) and Fauvel and Milchhöfer, men whose explorations made Attica known to Western audiences, but at the same time disassociate themselves from other visitors to the site whose motivations are perhaps less scholarly. The reading of one set of marks as historically interesting (and therefore worthy of recording) and another as vandalism (and therefore not) is telling.¹⁰ The practice of writing a name, as well as the reception of it, therefore situates both the owner and the reader within a community and is a way for both to negotiate status within that community. These

communities may be malleable, subjective, and may change, but the act of naming always connects an individual with a group.

One might see the footprints at these sites in a similar light. Like personal names, footprints are also known to have a commemorative function, marking the owner's presence in an area (Dunbabin 1990: 86, 97).¹¹ But they also had an erotic association, both in terms of the desirability of women's feet and ankles, and in terms of euphemistic references to genitalia (Levine 2005). What's more, bare feet were linked with sexual intercourse, something which is relevant for the interpretation of the foot outlines on Hymettos and in Thorikos since they appear in a clearly sexualised context, sometimes with toes drawn in (Langdon 1985b: 266; Levine 2005: 66–8). The juxtaposition of foot outlines with sexual texts and images is surely more than coincidence here and they should not be seen as images separate from the texts. Indeed, if seen from the point of view of commemorative practice, drawing a footprint and writing a name are in fact very similar types of activities in that they both create an intimate connection with the self, and as we have seen with naming, this in itself connects the individual with a wider group. Although on the surface footprints are more ambiguous than a name (because they appear to be a much more anonymous symbol), they are only anonymous to the later viewer. To the producer of the mark, their meaning is clear: they represent the individual owner of the foot, human or divine (indeed many seem to be outlines of actual feet).¹² The fact that some footprints are themselves named reinforces this connection (*IG I³ 1399 bis*: Timesikles; *SEG 40.262*: Kreon). Drawing a footprint therefore could be as intensely a personal experience as writing your name, and we might see the depictions of genitals in the same light, as unique symbols of one's person(a), as well as clear erotic signs.¹³ In some contexts we might even be able to use these footprints to reconstruct subaltern experiences (see Webster 2008: 118–22 and further below).

Kalos names (both praising and insulting) can also be interpreted in a similar way since they memorialise the emotional response of one person for another; often shaped, of course, by desire (unrequited or fulfilled). The sentiments recorded here may well reflect the types of activities which took place in these locations (Langdon 2004: 205), but there is no firm evidence outside of the graffiti itself to suggest that this is actually the case. These may simply commemorate emotions (love, hate, desire, rejection) which are then expressed in the form of *kalos*-name statements. Writing a *kalos* name encourages the viewer to think of the subject of the graffiti (e.g. Deinias), and it has been noted, particularly in studies of *kalos* names on pottery, that it is 'the name of the person acclaimed that is important, not the identity of the speaker' (Lissarrague 1999: 361). To some extent this is true of the *kalos* names which appear in these contexts: a text such as 'Deinias *kalos*' addresses the passer-by and encourages him or her to repeat the sentiment of the writer through the act of reading (Svenbro 1993: 191); to think that Deinias was, in fact, *kalos*, (or that [-]tiades was a *proktos*,

or Aithonides a *katapugon*). But if we view this within the framework of commemorative practices, we see a more complex picture emerging. Many examples of *kalos* names have a footprint nearby, and as we have seen these are both reinforcements of the sexual content of the graffiti, and highly personal links to the writer himself.¹⁴ Instead of forming an association with the subject of the inscription, both footprints and personal names link directly to the owner of the footprint, or the owner of the written name. They encourage the passer-by to think of the writer or inscriber. When *kalos* names appear with footprints, they recall both the object of emotion and the subject (the person) of the writer. The communicative strategy here is complex and multi-layered, but in all these examples, the result is that it is socially connective.

Temporality: Return and Reception

Individual relationships are therefore both shaped and evoked through the act of inscribing, but these markings situate individual memorialisation within a social context and in this way create social memories (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs [1925] 1992).¹⁵ At both Thorikos and Hymettos we find clusters of graffiti which seem to have been built up over time. Though we cannot single out with any accuracy many details of absolute, or even relative, chronology, as far as we can tell, these markings were not made in a single moment in time: some markings cut across others (*IG I³ 1405* quater: the feet partly cut across the name, see Langdon 1985b: Figure 1; also Figure 5.2 here), some letter forms appear to be early (*IG I³ 1399* bis: Timesikles), others appear late (*SEG 34.198*: Chares).¹⁶ This strongly implies that people returned to these places over a period of time, and in doing so commemorated themselves in similar ways (compare Mairs, this volume). Though we cannot say for certain, the fact that we find clusters of similar material in specific places suggests deliberate return and renewal, that is a continuity of practice (Cattell and Climo 2002: 21). This continuity implies not only that making oneself visible is important, but also, since these marks are not made by a single person, it implies a process of legitimisation by a group. Perhaps not everyone who came across these marks found them a socially acceptable means of communication, but it is clear that some did (Connerton 1989: 36–7; Frederick 2009: 228).¹⁷ Memorialising one's individual presence or recording one's personal emotions allowed others to share that experience, even if that experience was modified through the act of reception (Cattell and Climo 2002: 12–13). The cumulation of material over time demonstrates that those who saw these marks sometimes responded by marking their own presence in a similar way. The social connectivity of writing a name, drawing a footprint or phallus, or inscribing a *kalos* name not only reflects past social interactions, but also shapes them in the future. Returning to these sites and responding to them therefore constructs social memories (Cipolla 2008: 199, 211–12).

These clusters therefore might be read as sites of social memory, that is, places which become important for the formation, negotiation and contestation of individual as well as group identities. How these multiple identities are configured is difficult to decipher in detail from the markings alone, but it is hard to read material cut into the rock in the fifth century without thinking of Athenian autochthony myths about being literally born from the earth (Rosivach 1987; Loraux 2000). Writing your name or outlining your foot in the bedrock might literally press your claim as belonging to the Athenian community at large, but perhaps we are going too far if we read these markings as contributions to a dialogue about what it meant to be Athenian. These markings may have cultic resonances too. The phallus, though a clear sexual symbol in some contexts, is also associated with Dionysos, a god who is particularly important within the Attic countryside and celebrated in a number of Attic festivals (Detienne 1989: 260–5; Henrichs 1990: 266–7; Csapo 1997; Parker 2005: 199–201, 316–17). What's more, much of the material found at these sites is intensely masculine: it consists of depictions of phalluses, men's names, comments on men's sexuality and/or emotions (positive or negative) about other men. Having said this, women do appear: Langdon interprets some of the markings on Hymettos as a woman's name, accompanied by a vagina (Figure 5.2: but curiously these do not make it as a separate entry into *IG I³*).¹⁸ The phallus-creature at Thorikos may be a symbol of female sexuality, but this is female sexuality mediated through male heterosexual interpretations of female desire (phallus-birds can, at least according to Boardman 1992, be interpreted in this way). In a similar way, on a *kalos*-text found inscribed into the rock in Piraeus, Polytime is recognised as a cock-sucker (*IG I³ 1402: laik[as]t[ria]*).¹⁹ How we read these messages—as negotiations of citizen, religious or sexual identities—is clearly important for interpreting who made these marks and thinking about their range of meanings, but they also emphasise again that it is not just what the text or image says which is important, but where it situates the inscriber and/or viewer within a (or within a number of) group(s).

It is clear then that we should see these sites (and graffiti in general) not as static 'pictures' but as dynamic processes of production, re-production and reception over time, each interaction linking the viewer with those responsible for the marks, and in some cases shaping their subsequent production of further material. It was not just one individual who memorialised himself by writing his name on the rock, but a series of people, who in turn were influenced by what already had appeared. These places became, therefore, appropriate locations to leave one's mark in very specific ways and areas in which individuals connected themselves with others. In this way these sites created and shaped social memories in the same way that funerary monuments or war memorials did; the memories are of course differently configured—graffiti perhaps allows a more flexible and open-ended negotiation of memory than these other examples, even if, say, funerary

monuments can be added to, re-used or enhanced (Houby-Nielsen 1998). What should be stressed, however, is that these (often overlooked) markings are equally important as more 'formal' inscriptions in terms of how communities create and view themselves (Cipolla 2008). Pulling apart the chronological landscape emphasises the multiple layers of audience (ancient and modern) who respond to the graffiti in different ways. But this should emphasise that there is not one distinct 'meaning' which we should ascribe to this material; rather we should look for *meanings* which speak to different groups in different ways and potentially change over time (see also Milnor 2009: 290).

Creating Meanings; Creating Communities?

So far I have suggested that mark-making is inherently socially connective, and that it situates both the writer and the reader in a community or a group which, in turn, creates sites in which these groups negotiate their own status and identities. Is it possible then to pinpoint further how these groups were constituted?

The location of these clusters raises the question of whether workers at the quarries may have been responsible for, or associated with, at least some of these markings. Although this is of course speculative (there is no mark which self-consciously identifies any inscriber as a quarry-worker), there are grounds for arguing this case. First of all, the clusters at Thorikos and on Hymettos are found in areas in which a number of ancient quarries are recorded, and in which quarrying was an important part of the local economy.²⁰ Secondly, the workers associated with the quarries would have had easy access to the appropriate tools needed to inscribe on the rock-face. Thirdly, although there is no mark which specifically mentions any author as a quarry-worker, there are those which associate quarry-workers with the production of this material. One, from Thorikos, and dating to the fourth century, specifically mentions either a quarry, or the quarrying of stone (it is unfortunately fragmentary), together with a name (perhaps of a non-Athenian): [---] *Sōsia latom[ia]* (SEG 40.263; Mussche et al. 1984: 150, no. 86).²¹ Another, from a (Roman period) quarry on Hymettos, records a cutting thought to have been controlled by one Cethegus whose name is written twice (SEG 31.149; Ober 1981: 68–73). These examples confirm that quarry-workers had both the ability and desire to inscribe into the rock.²²

It should also be noted that stoneworkers were, in all probability, fairly mobile, something which is confirmed by building inscriptions set up in sanctuaries across the Greek world.²³ The Eleusinian accounts, for example, which record refurbishment of the sanctuary between 333/2 and 329/8 (IG II² 1672–3), mention a variety of Athenians and non-Athenians involved in various aspects of stone-working (some citizens, some metics, presumably some slaves). Crucially, when their deme or (for metics) deme of residence, is recorded, these are geographically widespread and not either clustered

around Eleusis or any quarrying area in particular.²⁴ Stone-working in general is a job which requires people of varying levels of technical skill, from the highly skilled master sculptors, who were in high demand, to those hired (slave or free) to move or square the blocks (Rockwell 1993: 3; *IG* II² 244 reflects this difference: it divides workers involved in repairing the Piraeus walls into those doing the cutting, carrying and cleaning, and those overseeing the activities).²⁵ Not all of those present at the quarry site would have been unskilled, since much initial shaping was done *in situ* (see the Naxos *kouros*, or the, probably Roman period, monolithic column at the Zeze quarry on Hymettos: Langdon 1988: 77, 79–81, with fig. 5). It is true that the Hymettos cluster is not directly associated with a quarry in the way that the name Cethegus is, but our knowledge of ancient quarries and road routes on Hymettos is not sufficiently extensive to rule out a link between this location and any specific quarry; indeed few roads survive on the mountain.²⁶ What's more, our knowledge of the working patterns, settlement habits and social status of quarry-workers is very sketchy indeed; we do not know, for example, to what extent work was seasonal, how it was organised, nor how frequently workers were employed from (e.g.) local demes (for suggestions about craftsmen in general see Feyel 2006; Cuomo 2007). The upshot of this, as well as the likelihood that stoneworkers were mobile, is that we should not expect to find traces of quarry-workers only inside, or on the immediate peripheries of quarries. Instead, given the mobility of the workers, the seasonal nature of employment in general, and continual prospecting for stone, we should expect a reasonably diffuse pattern of interaction with the landscape, which is exactly what we do find.

Indeed, the relationship between quarries and this type of communication is supported by evidence from outside Attica. Material similar to that found on Hymettos and in Thorikos has been found at Kalami and Phonea Plakka on Thasos, also in quarrying areas. Here there are a number of *kalos* inscriptions, describing men with a variety of different adjectives (*SEG* 32.847: Garlan and Masson 1982; Coulié 1998). Some of these refer to qualities (sweet, gracious), some to appearance (beautiful, fair-of-face), others note topographically-influenced qualities (urbane/sophisticated [*asteios*], rural/wild [*agreos*]) or that the person praised is like gold or silver (*chrysos*, *argyrous*).²⁷ Similarly, at the sanctuary at Alikí, which is again situated next to a quarry, a number of *kalos* names, dating between the fourth and second centuries, are found on the stylobate of the Doric portico (*SEG* 31.761–72: Servais 1980: 46–9). Some of these praise women (*SEG* 31.761b: Krokotis is beautiful (*kalē*); *SEG* 31.763a: Nikoboule in Ephesos is beautiful),²⁸ though men appear regularly too (*SEG* 31.763c: Bithys *kalos*; *SEG* 31.772: Teres *kalos*), and in one example *phalloi* are also depicted (*SEG* 31.772: the name Asklepiades appears between two *phalloi*). *Kalos* names are also found on architectural blocks, for example, in Athens on the *stoa poikile* (*IG* I³ 1404 ter: Shear 1984: 14–15), therefore reinforcing the connection between stoneworkers and this form of communication.

Other material, which at first glance appears similar, is that found at Thera, Nemea and Priene (Inglese 2008; Miller 2001; *IPriene* 313.725–31) and scholars have naturally drawn comparisons between these places (Langdon 1985b: 269, n. 24; Miller 1994: 89; Levine 2005: 62–3). Like the Attic and Thasian material, the graffiti from Thera and Nemea record *kalos* names, various other types of sexually explicit messages, and (in Thera) these are sometimes accompanied by foot-outlines, and genitalia (*IG XII 3*, 553).²⁹ In Priene couples are bound together in friendship (*philia*) on the walls of the ephebeion in the gymnasium. Arguably these are different to the material found in Attica and on Thasos, because they appear within gymnasium or athletic contexts. There is nothing to suggest this is the case with those from Hymettos, Thorikos, Kalami or Phonea Plakka. Contextualising this material, therefore, reveals some key differences. First of all, the Thera inscriptions are much earlier than the Thasian or Attic material (seventh or sixth century), and the Priene graffiti much later (late hellenistic/Roman).³⁰ The Priene material appears to record friendship (*philia*) between (mainly) two people rather than erotic statements (*IPriene* 313.725: the friendship of [-]phantes and Antiochos ([-]*phantou* [*k*]ai [*An*]tiochou [*phi*]lia); but see Chaniotis pages 204–5 for a different reading of *philia*-statements). However, the biggest difference is that in Thera, Nemea and Priene the graffiti appears in what one might term an ‘urban’ (or quasi-urban) context at a gymnasium, or other athletic facility, whereas this is not the case with the Attic or Thasian material.³¹ Instead of being linked to quarry workers, the material at the other sites is much more closely associated with either elite homosexual culture (Inglese 2008), or athletic competition (Miller 2001); all three examples appear within the context of elite education. There is no evidence to suggest this is the case in either Attica or Thasos. Indeed it would be surprising to find some of the Thasian names amongst members of the elite; they sound distinctively slave-like: Mus, Sosion, Muiskos.³² On this basis, these are most unlikely to be ‘young people from good families’ as described by Garlan and Masson (1982: 19).

Graffiti and Alternate Histories: Telling Different Stories

Perhaps then what we have in both Attica and Thasos is evidence for the epigraphic practices of non-elite groups (for example, the kind of people associated with quarries, rather than athletics). Though we cannot be sure in every instance, it is likely, given that quarries are features of all of these local areas, that many of the markings were either produced by, or seen by, those who were working at those quarries in some capacity. If this is the case, they therefore represent not only non-elite people communicating with one another epigraphically, but it shows also how they situated themselves, as individuals, within (non-elite) groups. Even though the location of these marks (and the space of work) certainly contrasts with the urban(e) space of the *asty*, and the use of pictures and short and simple pieces of text

is a long way from the carefully produced decrees, the published accounts and festival calendars of the Athenian state, we should not see these as the communications of marginalised groups *per se*, as modern graffiti research often suggests (Macdonald 2002). We might think of these groups as marginal if our focus is framed by the political narrative of citizen life, but they were certainly not marginal in terms of Athenian prosperity, and the content of these inscriptions (however one interprets them) connects closely with familiar concerns (male sexuality, religious piety, etc). By focusing on these markings as a way in which authors set about ‘performing one’s presence and place in the world’ (Frederick 2009: 213), we can perhaps see how they give a voice to normally silent people and therefore project a picture of Athenian society which is quite unlike that which is mediated through much of the surviving literature or epigraphic culture. Because of the ways in which this material has been categorised, its full potential has not been recognised, but by changing these conceptualisations, we can begin to reconstruct these alternate histories.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that all rock-cut markings in Attica were associated with quarries or quarry-workers; they are not (the Vari material, for instance, has a number of texts produced by shepherds and goatherds, but again, these are hardly the writings of elites). But there are grounds for arguing that at least some are, and there does seem to be a general association between areas in which we find quarries and places where this type of sexual material is found. In this sense one might expect to find similar clusters on Pentele (if they have not been destroyed).

Although we cannot be certain whether the attribution is correct, associating this material with those who were involved in quarry work has a number of implications. These are not the marks of those who have no free time; they situate people within communities and in doing so refer to relationships, emotions and personal interactions. It is worth emphasising that if these are quarry-workers, they had time to spend *not* working. Also, although at least some of these people were literate or semi-literate (this is reinforced by *IG* II² 244, the law detailing repair of the Piraeus walls, and most likely set up in a quarry: Richardson 2000: 605), writing words was not the only form of epigraphic communication: indicating one’s presence through drawing footprints or phalluses was also (and given the relative frequency, at least of the footprints, perhaps more) important, and these marks can be used to access different ways of engaging with the world (Webster 2008: 118–22). Illiteracy did not stop people engaging with epigraphic culture and reproducing aspects of it, and did not stop them making their mark. Of course we should not assume that those who drew footprints were *not* in any way literate—literacy encompasses a wide spectrum of engagement with the written word (see further the introduction to this volume; also Macdonald 2005a; Thomas 2009)—and in any case it is disproved by the named footprints which appears in more than one instance.

The clusters on Hymettos and Thorikos both reflect and shape the personal experiences of those who made and those who viewed them. They do not simply represent 'idlers' hanging around with nothing better to do, but are a culturally significant practice and one which both created and defined the communities to which these people belonged. In this way, through the repeated act of inscribing, and through the social memories these created, these groups were essentially representing a part of their own cultural experience, transferring to one another behaviours and attitudes, as well as information about emotional ties and relationships (Crumley 2002: 39). If stoneworkers produced and viewed these texts and images, one might use this as evidence to flesh out our understanding of this group of people, and by doing so we gain an insight into their skills (literacy), their relationships and emotional experiences, and perhaps their religious practices (the importance of Dionysos perhaps). The fact that many of these marks project ideas about masculinity is perhaps not unexpected under these circumstances, but if it is not too far-fetched to link ideas about autochthony with these marks, the implication would be that many of these quarry workers had some claim to be Athenian citizens, and therefore we might also be able to question models of Athenian society which play down the importance of citizen labour. But perhaps this is going too far. On the other hand, one might well see here traces of the dynamic processes of mobility and social change which created communities of craftsmen, that is, the flip side of the elite attacks on *technē* and the *banausoi* (Cuomo 2007: 35–8).

It is legitimate to ask, then, whether these are subversive marks, and in the sense that they most likely reflect the concerns of non-elite groups, the answer is a tentative yes. But in fact they prompt us to re-think what 'non-elite' means in Athens and in doing so question the very label of 'subversive'. What we see here is essentially a practice where making clear statements of belonging (through naming or drawing body parts) was an important part of self-definition, though one which was not perhaps relevant to all people throughout the entirety of their life. This self-definition does not obviously mark one out as different from the rest of Athenian society—none of these marks are political in the sense that they criticise aspects of Athenian society, in fact they represent people in very familiar ways: after all, *kalos* names, for example, are very common. In this sense, therefore, they are hardly subversive. But just as Cuomo argues that the presence of potters' signatures on drinking vessels infiltrated the 'base' craftsman into the elite world of the symposium (Cuomo 2009), the use of the *kalos* name formula to describe the emotions of quarry-workers similarly placed lower-class people into the world of the elite and a sexual culture often associated with the elite. We should not see this as surprising however. After all, quarry workers would have been in various 'networks of production' with individual members of the elite or the city in general (see especially *IG II² 244*: Richardson 2000); they—or those close to them—would have been commissioned to make dedications or grave monuments (not to mention

public commissions such as temples, walls or decree-production). *Kalos* names are certainly not confined to the symposium context, nor were they forms of sentiment associated solely with the elite.

The act of making one's mark on the rock in Attica, therefore, represents more than idle doodling. Contextualising the material, and tracing through the ramifications of the interpretations we can make has the potential to reveal much about the complexities of Athenian society, but also demonstrates how important these seemingly insignificant marks are for historians. Though it is essential to distinguish between different types of graffiti in Attica and assess them on a micro-level, it is also necessary to suggest interpretations of that material which situate it within the wider arguments of the discipline. These interpretations may change when more material comes to light, or may even be contested as they stand, but this approach, which privileges the small-scale and overlooked, can potentially bring big rewards.

Thinking of the material in this way is also important because it widens scholarly ideas about the epigraphic habit from an activity closely associated with the state production of inscriptions (Hedrick 1999) to one which shows the impact of epigraphic culture across different groups. The material presented here demonstrates the *diffusion* of epigraphic culture (and literacy—in a broad sense) throughout society and how it was used to both demonstrate and negotiate membership of different communities. The epigraphic habit, though an important feature of the Greek polis, is not therefore linked with citizenship *per se* any more than it is linked with democracy (Meyer 1993; Hedrick 1999: 396; Oliver 2003); instead it was a way for a wide variety of groups and communities to make their mark on the world and negotiate their status within it. The extent of the epigraphic habit provides historians with good material for discussing issues like literacy, but the material here strongly implies that illiteracy did not bar people from participating in epigraphic practice, both in terms of production and reception (see further Thomas 2009). What becomes clear when examining this material is that epigraphic culture in Athens was widely accessible, certainly not imposed from the top-down either by a state body or by elite groups, but was maintained and developed by those in a variety of different walks of life. The epigraphic habit in Attica was, therefore, remarkably wide and highly socially pervasive.

NOTES

- * I am most grateful to Kostas Vlassopoulos and Graham Oliver for their useful comments on this chapter. Merle Langdon kindly discussed the material with me, particularly that outside Vari.
- 1. That painted graffiti were not unusual in Athens is demonstrated by Ar. *Wasps* 98: 'By Zeus, if he sees written on a door somewhere that Demos, the son of Pyrilampos is beautiful (*Démon . . . kalon*), he will write near it

'Kemos (the muzzle) is beautiful' (*kēmos kalos*)!'. Of course architectural graffiti is not only painted; see, for example, the second-third century CE inscribed material on the columns of the quadriporticus in the market of Caesar and Augustus: Hoff 2006.

2. Dating these markings is problematic: the Hymettos material is thought to be from the 'classical period' (Langdon 1985b: 264); the Thorikos material from the late fifth/early fourth century. They are dated on letter forms, but these can only ever be indicative at best, and at worst are misleadingly imprecise (see the 3-bar sigma controversy: Mattingly 1996; Henry 2001). Dating pictorial graffiti is equally difficult: pictures which appear with or near texts are usually reliant on the texts themselves (and therefore letter forms) for dating, even if there is no way of telling in what chronological sequence the pictures and texts appeared. Comparisons with other visual media, e.g. painted pottery, have also been used such as for the Sounion hoplites dated by Langdon (1991) to c. 500 'with generous latitude left on both sides of that date', or the Vari ships, dated to the late sixth century by Langdon and van de Moortel 2000: 86–8.
3. A number of unpublished footprints were seen at Thorikos in the area between the theatre and the town by Polly Low and myself in August 2007; 'numerous footprints' are noted by Bingen 1991: 39 at Thorikos and Langdon (*pers. comm.*) confirms their presence in Thorikos as well as noting that he has seen more on Hymettos since the publication of Langdon 1985b. Langner 2001: no. 1281 is a phallus-creature (body of a horse, head of a phallus) and dated (by Langner) to the Roman period, but it is more likely that this is earlier since there is very little evidence that Thorikos was inhabited during this time: there is a small amount of Late Antique material (two storage amphorae fragments, some fifth-century CE lamps, and a couple of fourth/fifth-century CE graves) but very little from the first centuries CE (Mussche 1998: 65). Under these circumstances, it seems unlikely (though not impossible) that the phallus-creature was dated to the Roman period (unfortunately it is not published by the Belgian team). Comparison with depictions on pottery suggest a date during the fifth century BCE when the iconography of phallus-birds was relatively common, see Boardman 1992. It is not found on fourth-century Attic red-figure pottery, though there are later examples from other areas of the Greek world, notably Delos.
4. See also IG I³ 1404: 'Teisitimos *kalos*' found near Liopesi (ancient Paiania) on Hymettos; Vanderpool 1962: 399, no. 1. This inscription is accompanied by what Vanderpool thought was a modern graffiti: a line from Sophocles' *Antigone* (781: 'love is unconquered in battle'). One might view this as an interesting dialogue between the two texts as can also be seen in Pompeii (Benefiel, this volume), but in this case over a much longer period of time.
5. SEG 34.198 is quite weathered and it is not certain whether *kalos* or *kakos* is written here, but either way the sense is certainly insulting. Another word appears underneath ([-]*aios*) which is thought by the *ed. pr.* to be another insult but it is difficult to read: see Mussche et al. 1990: 184–6, no. 80. See also SEG 40.264: [-]*tiadēs ho proktos* from Thorikos (further, Bain 1994). On *kalos* names in general see Dover 1989: 111–24. For an alternative translation of *katapugon* as 'lecherous' or 'sexually excessive' see Davidson 2001: 22–3.
6. The Vari material (as yet unpublished in full, but see SEG 49.2, 50.101–3) consists of a number of pictures of ships, horses, dogs and footprints, as well as sexual insults and personal names. The term *mnēma* (here *mnēma*) refers to a memorial, or the remembrance of a person or a thing. It is often used on grave monuments, but this does not seem to be its meaning here: Langdon

2005: 179. Langdon informs me that this formulation occurs commonly within the Vari material (*pers. comm.*). In this sense, then, the so-called 'grave of Posthon' in Sounion (Langdon 1985a) is unlikely to be a grave, rather than a record of 'Posthon's' presence. At the very least, the repetition of the name here (it appears three times) makes the identification of this site as a grave unlikely.

7. Presumably most names are written by their owners, but it is possible (though unlikely in this case since Kreon's name is accompanied by a footprint) that they were written by someone connected with them. For other names inscribed into the rock in Attica see also *IG I³ 1409 bis* (Antidike), sixth century, Cliff farm; *SEG 26.137* (Zoilos), fourth century or after, Cliff farm; *SEG 31.139* (Cethegus), first century CE (?), Hymettos; *SEG 28.208* (Chairestrates), fourth century, Lavreotiki. The latter two are in the genitive and clearly denote a claim to ownership of some sort.
8. See also *IG II² 13237, 13239*; Snell 1926: 159–62 all Roman in date. Inscribing one's name on religious architecture or within sanctuaries is common in the ancient world (see Mairs, this volume) and does not appear to have been considered desecrating in any sense. Compare the description of Thomas Smart Hughes, a nineteenth-century English traveller in Greece, of sailors who, in the 1810s, 'brought a tar-barrel on shore at Cape Sunium and bedaubed the white and brilliant columns of Minerva's temple [sic] with long lists of their own names and those of their officers and boat-crews. This instance of barbarianism we saw with a mixture of surprise and indignation' (Smart Hughes 1830: 269–70). Had he visited a few years later, one wonders whether he would have held the same disgust for Byron or Fauvel.
9. The site is the so-called Dragon house, which is thought to be a store-house or office for quarry managers (Carpenter and Boyd 1977: 193) or a shelter for quarry workers (Ober 1981: 72).
10. Compare, for example, the recording of the graffiti from the first half of the twentieth century on the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous by Petrakos 1999: 236, 270–1. Petrakos provides excellent drawings of the graffiti (figs. 148 and 182) which records a number of names of local shepherds and farmers (as well as members of the Soutzos family and A.A. Metaxas), alongside hand-outlines, Christian and Jewish symbols, birds and various forms of transport.
11. For other functions of footprints (and feet), which are common in many different contexts across the Mediterranean world throughout antiquity, see Guarducci 1942–1943; Kötting 1983; Dunbabin 1990; Forsén 1996: 24–6. They appear in sanctuaries as votives, marking thresholds, in bathhouses, as signs of epiphanies, as sexual symbols, etc.
12. That body parts are both intimately connected with the person, and conceived of as separable from the body as a whole, can be seen by comparing the dedication of anatomical votives in numerous sanctuaries across the Mediterranean world. See van Straten 1992: 260–1; Forsén 1996. Indeed the identification of the owner of a footprint was not a problem for the gods.
13. For genitals as symbolic of personal identity see Keuls 1993: 72–3; as a political symbol: Quinn 2007: 89–90. It may be that combining, say, footprints with depictions of phalluses was not always appropriate (they appear together only in what Dunbabin 1990: 96–7 calls 'secular' contexts), but they clearly became associated with one another in these locations and here they commonly appear together. In fact the only place where a phallus appears without a footprint nearby is on the Cliff farm (here it is accompanied by a *heta*): Goette 1994: 133–4, no. 5. One wonders whether this marks a boundary (*horos*) like a herm. An inscribed phallus, which might have a similar

function, appears on the south door jamb of shop III in the second-century stoa of Attalos in the Athenian agora: inv. 1997.07.0453. The '*beta*' (H) could be some kind of labelling mark like that on *horoi* 15-19 on Alepovouni, though what this means is admittedly obscure. For the Alepovouni *horoi*, see Langdon 1999: 497-8.

14. Footprints are associated with Deinias, Aithonides, and Chares; they are not reported as part of [-]tiades' graffito, but it is clear that there are footprints nearby (*SEG* 40.262 is 4 m away, and there are a number of unpublished footprints in the vicinity): see Mussche et al. 1984: 151, and n. 3 above. Langdon 2004: 204 thinks the footprint accompanying Aithonides' inscription is 'part of one composition'. Footprints are not reported by Vanderpool in his *ed. pr.* of *IG* I³ 1404 (Teisitimos), nor in the other rupestral *kalos* inscriptions which appear in *IG* (I³ 1402-1404 bis) but perhaps they did appear nearby at least at one time.
15. There is a close link between individual memory and social memory in current memory scholarship. Although one might not personally experience certain 'memories', these can be remembered through the symbolic resonances of objects, words or activities. See Cipolla 2008 or Cattell and Climo 2002: 12, who argue that 'individual memory can be viewed as an aspect of social memory'.
16. Timesikles: seventh/sixth century (Mussche et al. 1990: 183, no. 79), s. VI? (*IG*); Chares: first half of fourth century (Mussche et al. 1990: 184-6, no. 80).
17. The quantity of epigraphic writing may suggest that writing (or writing on the rock) *per se* was not considered a bad thing, and the fact that we find similar types of material content-wise on pottery suggests that the writing of sexually explicit material was not unacceptable as such, but we do not know to what extent it was considered appropriate in these locations.
18. Langdon 1985b: 268. The name is difficult to decipher, but so is the material collected under *IG* I³ 1405 quater which gets its own entry. It is mentioned in *IG* I³ 1403 bis: 'iuxta titulum hunc alter, dubiae lectionis, sed dubio obscoenus'. Outside these clusters, the name Antidike is carved into the rock on the Cliff farm (*IG* I³ 1409 bis) and female sexuality is hardly absent from the epigraphic record in general (see, for example, the inscribed breast/vulva dedications at the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos on the Pnyx in Athens: *IG* II² 4783, 4800, 4803-4, 4809-10: Forsén 1993: 515-6; 1996: 72-4).
19. For the meaning of this term see Jocelyn 1980. Presumably this is not intended as an insult since it is coupled with a *kalos* name: 'Arisemos *kalos*, Polytime laik[as]t[ria]'.
 20. Hymettos quarries: Kara (Heliopolis): mentioned by Dow and Breadon in Robinson and Pierce Blegen 1935: 268 but never published; around Ag. Kareas and Ag. Georgios: Milchhöfer 1883: 25-8; Ober 1981; Alepovouni: Langdon 1999: 499-500; Liopesi: Langdon 1988: 76 (possibly ancient); Zeze: Langdon 1988. Thorikos quarries: Mussche 1998: 45, with figs. 84-90. Agrileza quarries: Goette 1991. Indeed, there is a great deal of rock-cut material throughout the Agrileza valley: Mont Michel: (to the north): hoplites (Langdon 1991); (southeast): *horos*, name in genitive (Langdon 1978 [1980]: 108-9, no. 1-2). Cliff farm: a religious calendar, Artemis invocation, debt notice, phallus and the letter *beta* (Langdon and Watrous 1977; Goette 1994: 133-4). Near the 'Princess' tower: the *mnema* of Posthon (Langdon 1985a; Oikonomides 1986a; see also n. 6 above). Souriza valley: the *mnema* of Aischines (Goette 1994: 130-3). Golden pig tower: *horos* (Langdon 1978 (1980): 109-10, no. 3). It is noted that of the 400 inscriptions published by Petrakos 1999 from Rhamnous, none are cut into the rockface.

21. Though the name to be restored is uncertain (it could be Sosias, Sosiades etc), names beginning in 'Sosia-' (of which Sosias is by far the most common) are sometimes associated with Thracians/slaves (see Ar. *Vesp.*). The name is common in Thrace but nearly half of the known bearers of this name in Attica are definitely Athenian citizens (including a fifth-century *tamias*, which in itself implies a certain level of wealth: Ant. 5.69–71) whereas only one is directly attested as being a Thracian. We might speculate about the status of our Sosias (assuming this is a correct restoration of the name): is he a citizen or a foreigner? If the latter, is he a slave/freedman? Is he an *epitropos* (overseer) of someone else's property like Sosias the Thracian slave/freedman (Xen. *Vect.* 4.14) in charge of the Nikias' slave workforce? To what extent was the workforce made up of foreigners?
22. On a general level the presence of quarries correlates pretty well with the appearance of rock-cut graffiti, even if this graffiti is not always inside (as SEG 31.149) or right next to (SEG 40.263) these quarries (see n. 20). There are small quarries found near Liopesi, as is IG I³ 1404, numerous quarries (over 150) have been found in the Piraeus (Langdon 2000), as is IG I³ 1402.
23. The sanctuary contexts may imply particular types of workers and may not represent all of those involved in the industry but nonetheless demonstrates the mobility of stone-workers. Delos, Delphi and Epidauros seemingly attracted a more panhellenic group of workers than building in Athens which seems to recruit on a more local basis but this may simply reflect the attractions of Athens as a city for foreign craftsmen who were already registered as metics there. Even so, those mentioned on the Erechtheion and Eleusis building inscriptions are not solely recruited from the immediate vicinity, but spread widely across Attica. See Feyel 2006: 341–6.
24. Skambonidai, Paiania, Kydathenaion, Kollytos, Alopeke, Korydallos, Eitea are mentioned: see Clinton 2008: 190–4 (men with connections to other areas of Attica also appear in these inscriptions but they are involved in activities other than stoneworking). Though we must expect some degree of migration within Attica, demotics give a reasonable sense of where an Athenian may have had 'the centre of his life' even if he did not reside in the ancestral deme. For migration within Attica in general see Taylor forthcoming.
25. Low skilled jobs were not only performed by slaves: Bion of Paiania, a deme close to the quarries at Liopesi (see n. 20 above), is recorded as a hauler on the Eleusis inscriptions (IG II² 1672 line 95). Although we cannot say that he moved blocks from the Liopesi quarries to Eleusis (rather than any other quarry), presumably low-skilled labour from nearby demes was commonly used for this task.
26. See Tomlinson 2002: 38: it is 'difficult to find physical traces of the roads over Hymettos', but he also argues that only some routes would be traceable in any case: 'foot traffic [. . .] does not have to keep to the carefully graded roads; provided that the going is not too steep or rough, or the height impossible' (Korres and Tomlinson 2002a: 145). For discussions of the road networks on Hymettos see Langdon 2002; Goette 2002; Tomlinson 2002; Korres and Tomlinson 2002a, 2002b. By the third century there seems to have been a major route over Hymettos less than 2 km north of the graffiti cluster leading to the fort at Helioupolis: Korres and Tomlinson 2002a: 144–6.
27. For discussion of the variant spelling and meaning of *agreos* (*agrios*), see Taillardat 1983: 189.
28. A similar formula is also used in the Nemea inscriptions: 'Moschos is beautiful at Philippi' (*Moschos k[al]os em philippois*), though Miller notes that this may not be a dative of place. See Miller 1994: 89–90; 2001: 87–8.

29. The phallus is not depicted in the original publication; it appears in the supplement however: *IG XII, 3, Suppl.* 1417. See also Inglese 2008: 262–3, no. 45.
30. The Nemea tunnel graffiti appears to date between 330 and 270. See Miller 2001: 88–9. *IPriene* dates most of the *philia* inscriptions to the first century BCE, but 313.730 is thought to be Roman.
31. The Priene lower gymnasium is located on the edge of the city, but still within an urban setting. Other material at Priene include the so-called *topoi* inscriptions, which record the names of men, thought to be pupils at the gymnasium: *IPriene* 313.1–724. Compare the sexual graffiti in the agora at Monte Iato in Sicily dating to the third/second century BCE: Taeuber 2003, or that at Aphrodisias: Chaniotis, this volume page 204–5.
32. See Robertson 2008 for discussion of names commonly held by slaves: Mus (mouse), Muiskos (little mouse), Sosion (derived from the verb ‘to save’). Mus (and derivatives) is also a name associated with sexual adventure: see Ael. NA 12.10 citing a number of comic authors. For discussion, see Taillardat 1983: 190.

6 Transcripts of Dissent?

Political Graffiti and Elite Ideology Under the Principate*

Alexei V. Zadorojnyi

Écrivez partout!

Avant donc que d'écrire, apprenez à penser.

Write everywhere!

Before writing, learn to think.

(Paris graffiti of May 1968: Rohan 1988: 74)

Scholars and the broader public today are used to construing graffiti as the *a priori* refractory counter-hegemonic voice. Whether criminalised, tolerated or celebrated, graffitied texts and art rupture the syntax of the capitalist (totalitarian, occupied . . .) cityscape and overwrite it in the vernacular of dissent which can be directly political or mediated through cultural (musical, erotic, religious, iconographic, alphabetic . . .) statements.¹ In a classic study James C. Scott described dissent and resistance that gestate at the level of small-scale subversive practices as 'infrapolitics' (Scott 1990: 183–201). The majority of graffiti produced by societies equipped with mass literacy are indeed infra- or micro-political in their contents. Graffiti sometimes kick against authority with *what* they say or depict, but their primary and defining characteristic is spatial insubordination, that is appearing on surfaces *where* they have no right to be (cf. Stewart 1987: 174; Chanotis, this volume). A true graffito is a text that makes a show of its problematic relationship towards the physical and semiotic complexion of the surface it is written on—in the parlance of French critics, towards its own *support formel* which breaks down as:

the reception structure of the inscriptions, the aggregate of spatial regimes (*des règles topologiques*) of, notably, positioning, size, proportioning and sectioning whereby the inscribed symbols are constrained and made to signify.²

(Fontanille 2005: 186)

Read from the perspective of spatial and social authority over the *support formel* (rather than medium, contents or style), graffiti represent a trajectory of dissent even if their message is not overtly politicised;³ to sabotage the established ownership of space is a political enterprise already.

But whose politics is it in the longer run? More generally, can counter-culture such as graffitism withstand absorption into the curriculum of the dominant culture? It is known for the tactics and content of graffiti to be appropriated by the broadly dissident intelligentsia and thus acquire prestige and cultural canonicity. The elegantly aphoristic Parisian graffiti of May 1968 (e.g. *La barricade ferme la rue mais ouvre la voie*, 'A barricade closes the street but opens the way')⁴ are of course a case in point. So is the humble 'Kilroy was here' that progressed upwards through the mythology and literature of World War II—the milestone was no doubt Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*—to become engraved on the World War II Memorial in Washington DC.⁵ In the Monty Python film *Life of Brian* (1979) the idea of graffiti as a tool of anti-imperialist resistance is subsumed into parody that tickles the English middle class, for the humour of the ROMANES EUNT DOMUS episode will be enjoyed to the full by viewers who have studied Latin, preferably in an old-fashioned public school.

To what extent are these insights applicable to the ancient graffiti? Can we analyse them while keeping in mind that the Greek and Roman urban space was not perceived by its inhabitants as 'a free-form text' (Fredrick 2003: 204) but rather as a conglomeration of specific and acknowledgeable societal and paideutic parameters? Do we have access to a framework of reference that would allow us to speak of the Greco-Roman graffiti under the Roman empire as counter-hegemonic and somehow counter-cultural? And is it possible to reconstruct the attitude(s) towards graffiti among the Greek and Roman intellectual elite whose cultural and political superiority rests on commitment to literary *paideia* as a dynamic and competitive, but also conservative, echeloned and exclusionist discursual matrix?⁶ How much risk would the imperial elite, as insiders of this normative cultural matrix but also as upper-class subjects in an autocratic state, be prepared to take with the dissent of graffiti?

To quarry for ideology in a field of material that is sociologically and often (para)textually opaque is no straightforward task. William Harris sums up the problem with clarity:

[. . .] defining the social range of graffiti writers has so far proved to be a practical impossibility. [. . .] Almost all graffiti leave the status, sex and occupation of the writer and of the expected reader indeterminate.

(Harris 1989: 231 and 261)⁷

The relationship between the ancient graffiti and the paideutic and political patterns of Greco-Roman discourse must be continuously negotiated around the difficulties of verifying even the rudimentary identities behind the extant inscriptions. Hence weighing the graffiti against education and status can turn into an exercise contingent on one's interpretative premises. As noted in the introduction to this volume, the great epigraphist Augustus

Mau notoriously believed that the ancient graffitists were not representative of the best elements of society (Mau 1899: 482). Nowadays commentators take a less dim view of the people who ‘scratched graffiti into the stone to reclaim the surface for the popular culture’ (Toner 2009: 159). A fine recent study of the Vergilian graffiti of Pompeii argues that these inscriptions ‘represent [. . .] the meeting point between two genres of writing, between pragmatic, urban, everyday texts and those that emerged from the sphere of elite cultural production’ and ‘put the [poetic] canon to work in the ancient urban environment’ (Milnor 2009: 294, 309).

For all that, one would wish for a reliable scale to measure the discourse of graffiti against that of the literary elite, and vice versa. The absence of such a scale, since we usually cannot ascertain who the graffitists were, continues to thwart the debate. Let us have two eloquent examples from, respectively, Herculaneum and Pompeii:

Apollinaris, doctor to the emperor Titus, had a good crap here (*Apollinaris medicus Titi Imp his cacavit bene*).

(CIL 4.10619)

Fucked, I say, fucked, with legs held up, was the Roman citizens’ pussy wherein no other but the sweetest and holiest sounds were heard (*futurebatur inquam futurebatur civium Romanorum a(t)tractis pedibus cu(n)nus in qua (re) nul(la)e aliae vices erant nisissei dulcis(s)im(a)e et pi(i)ssimae*).

(CIL 4.1261)

The first of these graffiti, found in the latrine of the House of the Gem at Herculaneum, blends pomp and scatology in a manner that could do Petronius or Lucan of the Suetonian *Vita* proud.⁸ Is CIL 4.10619 an ironic and (infrapolitically) subversive text then? (Are Petronius and Lucan subversive?!). Maybe the Flavian emperors did not mind jokes about defecation (cf. Suet. *Vesp.* 20)? Or is it somebody else making a dig at the highfalutin elite doctor (Fagan 2006: 204, n. 63–4)? Or was it written by Apollinaris himself feeling smug about his career and metabolism (Neudecker 1994: 34)?

The explicit and florid CIL 4.1261, from the exterior of the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii, is even more taxing. Scholars are inclined to take it as a burlesque adaptation of Cicero’s passage from the *Second Verine* where the hapless Roman citizen is being flogged (Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.162);⁹ verbatim parallels are minimal yet the flair and pathos look convincingly Ciceronian. Whoever composed this text must have commanded enough learning to splice popular humour with its ‘focus on the physical’ (Toner 2009: 101) onto gilt-edged rhetoric—but to what purpose? To poke fun at the sexuality of the Roman (*Romanorum*) —women (hence *cunnus*) or perhaps male pathics?¹⁰ Maybe to ridicule Cicero’s oratory or to jeer at the

populus Romanus (Cugusi 1985b: 28), for some unspecified reason? I personally find it hard to imagine that a speaker of Latin could write *civium Romanorum* without getting a bit of the good old political thrill. What if the graffito is a bitterly sarcastic lament over the destiny of Rome itself?

Reading graffiti for ideology is likely to lead into a hermeneutic impasse. The more the reason to revisit the narrative ‘elite’ sources as a guidebook to the socio-cultural valency and marketability of imperial graffiti. The advantage is that in literature and historiography graffitists have identities (anonymity is still revealing . . .), and expectations about graffitied messages can be sighted. Consider, for instance, the mini-conspiracy of the fictitious hetaera Chelidonion (‘Little Swallow’) in Lucian. Chelidonion’s lover has dumped her for philosophical seminars. We see her plotting to discredit the philosopher responsible by means of a graffito:

CHELIDONION: I also think I will write on the wall in Kerameikos (*epi tou toichou en Kerameikōi*), where Architeles usually takes his walk, “Aristaenetus corrupts (*diaphtheirei*) Clinias” < . . . >

DROSIS: How can you write unnoticed (*lathois*)?

CHELIDONION: At night, Drosis, with a piece of charcoal (*anthraka*) from somewhere.

(Lucian *Dial. meret.* 10.4; transl. A. M. Harmon, modified)

Here, Chelidonion is portrayed as a literate woman. Her life revolves around sex yet she wishes to hit back at the male world of philosophy (surely she knows what happened to Socrates?). More importantly, she and her friend realise that their graffito need to infiltrate the public space in clandestine ways, at night. Chelidonion’s graffito will be an act of private, very infrapolitical disobedience but it is still a breach of societal authority. It is not accidental that she takes the same precautions as male graffitists in dramatic political scenarios (Polyb. 15.27.3; see further discussion on page 125 below). Lucian switches on the stereotype of graffitism facilitating dissent both through the inscribed text and specifically through its *support formel* (wall, charcoal, night). The dialogue’s reader is thus left in the ambiguous position of alert but equally amused observer, complicit in the otherness of Chelidonion’s writing yet relishing its fiction from a position of security.

In this chapter I am going to tackle references to graffiti in the Greco-Roman imperial literature as an intersection of the ideologies of power and writtenness. I will argue that the polyphonous literary transcript of elite identity mobilises graffiti for their communicative and socio-political alterity—which it itself fastidiously creates. It is agreed that the imperial upper class never developed a coherent opposition to the principate (Raaflaub 1986; Potter 1999: 49–56); bad emperors die violently and receive bad press after death, but the system is not fundamentally questioned. I will propose that graffiti are necessary in the elite discourse of the Roman

empire as an outlet of dissent the elite can both ache for and wash their hands of. Graffiti framed within the elite-oriented texts impart a frisson of counter-culture and counter-hegemony which are, nevertheless, related to and reflective of the elite's own agendas and anxieties.

THE ELITE READER VIS-À-VIS GRAFFITI

Before looking at graffiti embedded and focalised in the political narratives, it would be right to take stock of wall-writing in literary contexts that reveal and negotiate the elite socio-cultural sensitivities outside (as it were) the orbit of politics *per se*. The relevant passages are few and far between and obviously familiar to scholars of the Greco-Roman epigraphic discourse;¹¹ my aim in this section is to consolidate, detail and hopefully to clarify the high-grade literates' opinion(s) about graffiti as textual and political communication.¹²

The most programmatic pronouncement on contemporary graffiti occurs in Plutarch's essay *On Curiosity*. In this homiletic lesson targeting his default elite readership (van Hoof 2008; generally Stadter 2000; 2002) Plutarch advocates exclusion of 'bog-standard' inscriptions from the elite's visual behaviour:

So let's start with the slightest and most trivial things (*apo tōn brachyatatōn kai phaulotatōn*). For is it difficult not to read inscriptions on the tombs by the roadside (*en tais hodois tas epi tōn taphōn epigraphas*)? What is disagreeable about letting your eye pass over the graffiti on the walls (*ta kata tōn toichōn grammata tēi opsei paratrechein*) as you walk along? We should put this to ourselves: there is nothing useful or pleasant written there (*chrēsimon outhen oud' epiterpes en toutois gegraptai*)—just that X “remembers” Y “for good”, or that someone is “the best of friends”, and much similar nonsense (*kai polla toiautēs gemonta phlyarias*). Reading these appears to do no harm (*ou blapteîn*), but in fact it does without one's being aware of it, because it implants the practice of inquiring after things which are none of our business (*ta mē prosēkonta*).

(Plut. *On Curiosity* 520D–E; transl. D.A. Russell, modified)

Plutarch converts the gaze of the elite into a mechanism of cultural segregation within the architectural and communicative space they share with the non-elite literates. Tomb and wall inscriptions are not germane and indeed detrimental to the maintenance of the self as receptacle and conductor of paideutic norms. The sanitised tenor of the Plutarchan sample graffiti indirectly corroborates his demand for a sweeping and generic rejection: non-elite texts do not have to be obscene or unorthographic in order to end up in the negative discursal category (*phlyaria*).

Plutarch's dismissal of 'inscriptions on tombs by the roadside' (*en tais hodois tas epi tōn taphōn epigraphas*) might strike us as a snub at the deep-running and especially Roman view of funerary epigraphy as the platform for commemoration and societal self-presentism.¹³ The remark by the Elder Cato that reading tombs is good for practising one's personal and political memory (Cic. *Sen.* 21), encapsulates the instinct of the elite who rely on funerary display to preserve their names and achievements. So is Plutarch trying to talk the imperial readers into a revisionist appraisal of the epigraphic habit? Perhaps the Greek outlook of the essay is implicitly at odds with the Roman elite sociolect?

The answer has to be, I think, threefold. First, the Plutarchan phrase appears to conflate commemorative monumental inscriptions with 'parasitical' graffiti that crop up on monuments and other surfaces alike (cf. Lucian *Dial. meretr.* 4.2–3). Second, we might read the Plutarch passage quoted above (*On Curiosity* 520D–E) as a conscientiously joint Greco-Roman programme which translates the routine cityscape into moral education. The Greek perspective of the essay as a whole entails vibrant ethico-political interaction with Rome: The typical busybody is interested in 'those who arrived from Italy' (519B), the vogue for grotesque physicality among 'certain people at Rome' (520C: *en Rhōmēi tines*) sparks off a psychological case study, and the story about the philosophical statesman Arulenus Rusticus who, poignantly, accorded priority to oral philosophical performance (by none other than Plutarch himself) over a letter from the emperor (522E) exemplifies advanced restraint in dealing with whatsoever news. Third, Plutarch's distaste for inscriptions on tombs corresponds to a decline of elite self-commemoration in the Roman necropoleis from the last decades of first century CE (Mouritsen 2005: 46–55, 63). His bias is by no means revisionist, then, but reflects the mainstream shift in the ideology of upper-class publicity.

And yet Plutarch's wholesale denial of 'useful or pleasant' content (*chrēsimon, epiterpes*) to graffiti betrays experience in those very texts.¹⁴ Another Plutarchan passage proves beyond doubt that Plutarch himself did notice graffiti and put them to clever literary use. In the dialogue *Gryllus*, set against the backdrop of the Homeric *Odyssey*, the eponymous character—an ex-sophist (cf. 988F) transformed into a pig by Circe—argues with Odysseus on the comparative merits of human and animal life. To substantiate his claim that humanity is sunk in folly and unnatural vices including homosexuality 'among your nobles and aristocrats, let alone the worthless types' (990D: *hymōn . . . tōn semnōn kai agathōn, eō gar tous oudenos axious*), the pig cites a graffito:

On the tholos of Apollo Ptoieus one of you secretly inscribed (*lathōn . . . enegrapsen*) "Lovely Achilles (*Achilleus kalos*)", when Achilles already had a son. And I hear that the inscription is still extant (*diamenein*).¹⁵
(Plut. *Gryllus* 990E)

Given that the location is Boeotian and the graffito is described as 'extant', we can assume that Plutarch is drawing on autopsy to achieve a comic synchronisation of Achilles of the graffito with the Homeric hero.¹⁶ Thanks to Gryllus (whose name is synonymous with 'caricature': Pliny, *HN* 35.114; *P Oxy.* 2331 col. I.1), it transpires that in the Plutarchan literary universe didactic aversion to wall writing does not preclude ironic and flirty forays into the same. Contrary to Plutarch *On Curiosity* 520D–E there is pleasantry in graffiti for the discerning eye and on the felicitous rhetorical occasion (see also pages 118–20, 124–5 below).

The ideological loop between these two Plutarchan passages is made taut, with a great deal of cheek, in Martial's epigram addressed to one Ligurra (12.61). The poem is a smartly warped *recusatio* that hinges on the contrast between Martial's valuable poetry and the socially and aesthetically inferior poetry of a graffitist:

You are afraid, Ligurra, of my writing against you verses and a brief lively poem (*breve vividumque carmen*), and you long to seem worthy of such fear. But you fear in vain, and you long in vain. Libyan lions roar at bulls but do not trouble butterflies. I advise you, if you are anxious to be read of, to look for a boozy poet of the dark archway who writes verses with rough charcoal or crumbling chalk which folks read when they shit (*nigri fornicis ebrium poetam, qui carbone rudi putrique creta scribit carmina, quae legunt cacantes*). This brow of yours is not for marking with my brand.

(Martial 12.61; transl. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey, modified)

This is a quirky *recusatio* even by Martial's standards.¹⁷ The time-honoured pattern of refusing to write is to stress the mismatch between the grand theme and the writer's ability; poets normally decline to write epics. Here Martial refuses to write a 'short and lively' poem (which is of course his specialty: e.g. 2.6, 9.50) because it would be too good for the subject. Instead Ligurra is directed towards the murky world of graffiti. The paradox is that Martial produces a zestful cameo of the toilet poem that is antipodal to his own and thus offers Ligurra a deliciously insulting literary graffito. Martial polarises himself against the anonymous drunken graffitist (cf. 1.41.11: *non optimus urbicus poeta*, 'the second-rate street poet')¹⁸ and his trashy poetry written in a rank medium ('rough charcoal and rotten chalk') and consumed literally among the faeces.¹⁹ Yet the polarity has a wicked twist to it. Whereas Martial's *Epigrams* are marketed as prestigious texts both in terms of physical appearance (1.117.16–17, 3.2.6–11) and socio-cultural stature (1.1.2–3, 2.86.12, 4.86.1–4, 5.25.5–6, 10.9.3–4, 10.78.14–16, 12.2.15–16),²⁰ their bid for literary excellence is provocatively based on the self-professed lightweight quality (esp. 6.64.6–15; cf. Gold 2003: 593) and naughtiness (1.35.5, 3.69.4, 3.86.1, 4.14.12, 4.49.1–2, 5.2.3–5) but also on the not overly genteel aesthetics of drunkenness (11.5.3–5, 10.20.13,

13.1.4, cf. 1.27), dampness (4.14.12) and generally decay and dirt (Rimell 2008: 20–4, 34–5, 88). So the dichotomy between Martial's oeuvre and the sordidly situated graffito of 12.61 is not clear-cut at all.²¹ It would be fair to say that Martial simultaneously condemns the cultural otherness of graffitiism and celebrates it.

Plutarch and Martial depreciate graffiti as 'popular', that is banal and dirty literacy, but still make literary capital out of them. Their stance borders on the humour of the well-known Pompeian epigram (CIL 4.2487 = 4.1904, cf. 4.2641) addressing the wall which endures the 'irksomeness of so many writers' (*tot scriptorum taedia*: see further Keegan page 174); Martin Langner rightly concludes that the epigram is a teasing and socially pointed *mise en abyme* of a joke expressing the upper-class squeamishness about graffiti by way of yet another graffito (Langner 2001: 21 calls this 'an ironic recurrence [*ironische Wiederholung*] of the criticism that the alleged literati would be heard making'). What knits together the ideological fabric shared by Martial, Plutarch and the Pompeian epigram(s) is the impetus to triangulate the culture of the author and reader with the amorphous and inconsequential hubbub of the lowly inscriptions. In the case of Martial such triangulation comes close to destabilising the elite text. But it is more usual for the elite *Kulturträger* to gain from their encounter with graffiti—defensively (as in Plut. *On Curiosity* 520D–E) or in the guise of patronising inclusion. The latter strategy is adopted by the Younger Pliny in his epistolary *ekphrasis* of the temple of Clitumnus near Spoletum. Attention is focused on the inscriptions inside the shrine yet this is not done for the sake of epigraphy:

[. . .] and you shall study too: you will read numerous inscriptions by many people on every pillar and on every wall (*multa multorum omnibus columnis omnibus parietibus inscripta*), in honour of the spring and the god. Many of these you will admire, at some you will laugh—though you are actually too charitable (*quae tua humanitas*) to laugh at any.

(Pliny, *Ep.* 8.8.7).

Pliny and his addressee solidarise around a condescending and benign recognition of the parietal texts. Distancing themselves from the naivety or possibly misspellings of the graffiti²² on the columns and walls, the elite author and reader(s) of the *Epistles* nonetheless reinforce their own image as well-bred, discreet and genial operators:²³ they are too nice to laugh at the non-elite writing.

Literate culture is the lynchpin of the elite collective consciousness under the empire when power and writing are pragmatically as well as symbolically inseparable.²⁴ It is not surprising that writtenness evolves into a facet of socio-political reflection among the elite. Thus, tyrannical rule is steadily associated with oppressive escalation of writing;²⁵ the emperors' epigraphic

etiquette was similarly scrutinised (Zadorojnyi forthcoming). In a unique, if apocryphal, story told by Lucian towards the end of *How History Should be Written*, epigraphy allows a precocious intellectual to steal a march on the autocratic authority. The hero is the Hellenistic architect Sostratus who built the Lighthouse of Pharos:

Do you know what that Cnidian architect did? [. . .] After he had built the edifice he wrote his name on the masonry, plastered it with gypsum, and having thus hidden it (*epikalypsas*) inscribed the name of the reigning king. He knew, as it actually happened, that in a very short time the letters would fall away with the plaster and there would be revealed (*ekphanēsomenon*): “Sostratus of Cnidus son of Dexiphanes, to the Divine Sailors for the sake of them who sail at sea.”

(Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 62)

Lucian uses the anecdote as a parable of historiography that should transmit a true account to the posterity without putting the writer at risk in the present. Hardly political resistance here, however, the algorithm of hijacking authority over a monument via an inscription throws into relief the *raison d'être* of ancient graffitiism. Sostratus' *grammata* would have been a far cry, visually and stylistically, from most graffiti as we know them. Yet because this inscription challenges (albeit diachronically) the statutory control over the inscribed surface, it stands on the ideological cusp between monumental epigraphy and the bedrock communicative dissent of graffiti. Still, Sostratus does not seem to be interested in any tangible political outcomes—he is, after all, an allegory. The next section of this chapter, therefore, will explore graffiti that are more firmly lodged in the discourse of public dissent and subversion, at least according to the hindsight of the ancient narrators.

MATRICIDES, SLEEPERS, AND SNOBS

As transcript of dissent the extant political graffiti from the Roman empire are rather a letdown. Electoral nominations and squabbles (mainly from Pompeii) are numerous, certainly intense (Franklin 1980; 2001: 65–195; Mouritsen 1988; Cupaiuolo 1993, 90–2; Chiavia 2002), and at times bizarrely elaborate,²⁶ yet the horizon of these texts is confined to local politics. This makes perfect sense too: in a municipal centre like Pompeii bashing the Roman leadership is simply irrelevant (Zanker 1998: 131). Believable exceptions are in short supply and none too conclusive.²⁷

The stakes are much higher in the literary sources where graffiti aimed at prominent figures of the state, including the emperors, are cited. Satire and dissent prevail, although some graffiti energise a positive rather

than subversive message within the host-narrative. Plutarch's Roman *Lives* showcase a number of graffiti suggesting that (contrary to Plut. *On Curiosity* 520D–E above) such inscriptions are not useless for the elite ethico-politics. Tiberius Gracchus in Plutarch's *Life* receives graffitised pleas to pursue the land reform:

The common people (*dēmos*) kindled his eagerness and ambition greatly, by urging him through graffiti written on colonnades, walls and monuments (*prokaloumenos dia grammatōn en stoais kai to-ichois kai mnēmasi katagraphomenōn*), to recover the public land for the poor.

(Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 8.10; transl. R. Waterfield, modified)

Gracchus clearly pays attention to what is written on the walls he walks by. He will end badly for sure, yet his fate transcends the quotidian problematics of curiosity (Plut. *On Curiosity* 520D–E); the graffiti of his life were not trivial at all. Unambiguous presentment of graffiti as the political medium of the demos, which is an interestingly loaded word in Plutarch's Roman *Lives*, is noteworthy in its own right.²⁸ Another Plutarchan case of a (possibly) graffitied message meant for the eyes of Rome's Mister Big is located in Athens at the time of Pompey's visit (67 BCE):

As he [Pompey] was leaving the city, he read two one-line inscriptions addressed to himself (*apion aneginōsken eis auton epigegrammena monosticha*). The one on the inside of the city gate was, "To the extent that you realise you are mortal, you are divine"; the one on the outside was "We awaited you, we worshipped you, we saw you, we see you on your way."

(Plut. *Pomp.* 27.5; transl. R. Waterfield, modified)

The passage offers no clue about the execution, size or authorship of these half-flattering half-pedagogical inscriptions on the gates of Athens. As graffiti they might actually suit Plutarch's point better, since the lines suavely but resolutely remind Pompey of his mortality and the limits to homage he can enjoy from the grateful Athenians—effectively a polite lesson in humility which does not call for epigraphic grandeur.²⁹ Back in the Gracchan generation, it takes anonymous graffitists to undercut the monumental propaganda of the senatorial party after the massacre of Gaius and his supporters:

So at night some people added (*parenegrapsan tines*) to the temple's inscription this line: "A deed of derangement (*aponoias*) makes the temple to Concord (*homonoias*)".

(Plut. *C. Gracch.* 17.8; transl. R. Waterfield, modified)

The graffito implies abhorrence of bloody civil strife—a sentiment the narrator and his audience are likely to identify with—but also illustrates that with the removal of the Gracchi the crisis in the Roman state has not yet reached equitable closure. As often in Plutarch, moral reflection and political analysis work hand in hand; what is interesting is the choice of a graffito as the narrative’s ally here. Not all texts inscribed on walls are ‘nonsense’ (Plut. *On Curiosity* 520D–E: *phlyaria*), then!

The bulk of political graffiti in the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition are concerned with misconduct by the emperors. Compare the following examples:

Since universal hatred (*omnium . . . odio*) arose against him [Nero], there was no insult to which he was not subjected. A curl was placed (*cirrus appositus est*) on the head of his statue with the inscription in Greek: “Now there is a real contest and he must at last surrender”. To the neck of another statue a sack was tied and with it the label (*titulus*), “What could I do? But you have earned the sack.” It was written on the columns (*ascriptum et columnis*) that he had stirred up even the Gauls by his singing.

(Suet. *Ner.* 45.2; transl. J.C. Rolfe, modified)

At Nero’s entrance into Rome they pulled down the statues of Agrippina. One statue they did not have time to remove, so they threw a cloth (*rhakos*) over it so that it would look veiled. Immediately somebody wrote and affixed to the statue (*tis parachrēma epigrapsas prosepēxe tōi andrianti*) “I am embarrassed, and you are not ashamed.” In many places one could read (*ēn men kai pollachothi anaginōskein*) also this inscription “Neron, Orestes, Alcmaeon = matricides”.

(Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b; transl. E. Cary, modified)

He [Domitian] erected so many and such immense arcades and arches across the city, with chariots and triumphal emblems, that on one of them somebody wrote in Greek “It’s enough” (*ut cuidam Graece inscriptum sit “arci”*).

(Suet. *Dom.* 13; transl. J.C. Rolfe, modified)

For at the time of the proscriptions there was written on his [Augustus’] statue (*ad statuam eius adscriptum est*), “My father was a silver-dealer [cf. 3.1], I am a Corinthian-bronzer (*pater argentarius, ego Corintharius*)”, since it was believed that he arranged for some men to be included on the list of the proscribed because of their Corinthian vases. Later, during the Sicilian war this epigram was current (*epigramma vulgatum*): “After he has twice been beaten at sea and lost his ships, he plays dice all the time—so that he might win just once”.

(Suet. *Aug.* 70; transl. J. C. Rolfe, modified)

The diverse evidence yields a number of criteria for gauging the deployment of political graffiti at Rome: 1) use of space; 2) interchangeability of 'hard' and 'soft' writing surfaces; 3) the inbuilt paideutic pitch. Let me comment on these overlapping themes one by one.

1) The graffiti in these texts seek to command the public gaze. The distribution of 'outdoor' Pompeian graffiti confirms this; the buildings lining the town's major thoroughfares are more heavily inscribed (Laurence 1994: 96–100). In the narrative sources, however, the surface for display of graffiti-toed criticism is chosen with an eye to maximising the synecdochic proximity to its target. Many inscriptions quoted by Suetonius and Cassius Dio come not from the walls at large but form visio-textual collages³⁰ with statues of the emperor (Suet. *Ner.* 45.2, *Aug.* 70; cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.17 below pages 122–3) or of his victim (Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b above) or with the annoying imperial structure (compare Suet. *Dom.* 13 with Plut. *C. Gracch.* 17.8 page 119 above). Whereas the Plutarchan Athenians (Plut. *Pomp.* 27.5) ensured that Pompey spots their message by putting in on the city gates, those plucky Roman graffitiists tap into the visuality of power within the urban space. Images of authority, such as emperor's statues but also the praetorial tribunal (cf. Plut. *Caes.* 62.7, *Brut.* 9.5–7, App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112, and Cass. Dio 44.12.3 discussed below and Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.77) are regularly turned into a canvas for the civic sentiment.³¹ There is a performative and well-nigh theatrical dimension to this. The inscribed surface functions as the speaker of its own text (Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b, Suet. *Aug.* 70), gets physically dressed up (Suet. *Ner.* 45.2 and Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b, with Sen. *Suas.* 1.6 below), and even acts out dialogical exchange with you-know-who (Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b 'you are not ashamed'; Suet. *Ner.* 45.2 'what could I (Nero) do? Well, you (Nero) have earned the sack'). In short, the graffiti latch on to and profit from the political leverage embodied in their *support formel*.

2) But how on earth does one attach graffiti to a curl (*cirrus*, Suet. *Ner.* 45.2)? Presumably *titulus* is not a graffiti but a placard or tag, as is also implied by *prosepēxe* in the Cassius Dio passage (61/62.16.2a–b). And is *epigramma vulgatum* (Suet. *Aug.* 70) necessarily a graffiti? A strict medium-focused definition of graffiti as texts painted or scratched on parietal and monumental surfaces is thus quickly confounded by the ancient testimonies themselves. Moreover, a good handful of further passages quote lampoons (usually but not invariably versified) that are not unequivocally flagged as graffiti yet are homogeneous with graffiti both in content and manner of presentation. See, for example, the following:

A) all over the streets of Rome this verselet [mocking Ventidius Bassus] was posted (*vulgo per vias urbis versiculi proscriberentur*).

(Gell. 15.4.3)

B) many derogatory pamphlets were brought forth (*libelli proponebantur*) . . . like that one which was affixed to his [M. Antony's] statue (*ille*

qui subscriptus statuae eius fuit) . . . [in Greek] “Octavia and Athena to Antony: [in Latin] Take your property (*res tuas tibi habe*).”³²
(Sen. *Suas.* 1.6)

C) many such [sayings and poems] were posted or circulated (*proscripta aut vulgata*) both in Greek and in Latin [5 epigrams follow].
(Suet. *Ner.* 39.2)

D) the words “Give us back Germanicus!” were posted in many places and shouted everywhere during the night (*multifariam inscriptum et per noctes celeberrime adclamatum*).
(Suet. *Tib.* 52.3)

E) some people (*nonnulli*) lashed out (*exprobrarent*) in verses at the present ills and warned (*denuntiarent*) of those to come [5 epigrams follow].
(Suet. *Tib.* 59.1)

F) soon suchlike verses were circulating through the masses (*vulgo . . . ferrentur*).
(Suet. *Iul.* 20.2)

G) verselets in circulation (*diulgati*).
(Suet. *Calig.* 8.1)

H) I shall note the insolence of the local people [i.e. the Romans], the satirical posters which are known to statues (*festivos libellos quos statuae sciunt*) and the occasional snide remarks and abuse that resounds through the circuses (*illa obliqua nonnumquam dicta a concilio atque maledicta quae circi sonant*).
(Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.17)

The dichotomy of *proscripta aut vulgata* (example C) is a red herring: the discourse of political pasquinades draws on both writing and orality (D: *inscriptum et . . . adclamatum*, cf. H), blurring the boundary between them (*exprobrarent*, *ferrebantur*, and so on).³³ Categories of writtenness are subordinated to the teleology of mass disapproval and dissent. So in the Senecan passage (example B) a leaflet gets ‘written under’ a statue (*libelli . . . ille . . . subscriptus*), as if were a graffito. Writing can be altogether redundant: the symbolism of the sack on the statue is sufficient to denounce Nero’s matricide:

they hung a leather bag by night on one of his statues to signify that he himself ought to be thrown into one.
(Cass. Dio 61/62.16.1–2; transl. E. Cary, modified)

On the other hand if writing is used, one does need to be bothered about the statue.

Again, they abandoned on the Forum a baby to which was fastened a writing tablet (*prosedēsan* . . . *pinakion*) saying, “I will not rear you up, lest you slaughter your mother”.

(Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2; transl. E. Cary, modified)

I contend that this slippage between the scribal and oral formats available to the Greco-Roman public odium³⁴ is sustainable as well as strategically important to its ancient reporters. The ideological accent is on the function of the message, not on the ins and outs of its appearance and publication. Graffiti, pamphlets, oral couplets and non-verbal signs coalesce into a language of mockery and antipathy that harks back to but exceeds the licence of ritualised abuse.³⁵

3) Yet who owns this language? Ramsay MacMullen (1966: 40) once referred to anti-Neronian graffiti as ‘opposition of a lower order’. His phrase might be taken as pointer to the infrapolitical mood of the graffiti. My hunch is however that MacMullen saw graffiti pretty much like Augustus Mau did, that is as culturally and societally inferior texts. On closer reading, subversive graffiti in the literary sources do not readily warrant such assumptions. There may be a certain scornful ring to *versiculi* as a term for epigrammatic street-poetry (examples A, E and G above, pages 121–2), yet otherwise our graffiti demonstrate adequate *paideia*: there is knowledge of Greek at Rome (Suet. *Ner.* 45.2, *Dom.* 13) and of Latin in Athens (B), parodic application of legal formulae (ibid.; the *pinakion* of Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2), mythic references (the equation of Nero with Orestes and Alcmaeon: Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b) and a lot of tolerable versification. If the epigrams in Suetonius’ *Tiberius* 59, and especially in the *Nero* 39.2, are counted in, the literary culture of the lampoons (and their audiences) must look even more respectable. The resentment of upward socio-political mobility (Suet. *Aug.* 70 and Gell. 15.4.3 quoted above) as well the interest in Corinthian vases (Suet. *Aug.* 70)³⁶ are also notable.

So it is not easy to decide whether these utterances of dissent really belong to the anonymous urban masses or rather to the discursively accomplished literates (cf. Cupaiuolo 1993: 96, 131, 138; Horsfall 2003: 65 and 41–2).³⁷ There is no denying that literacy matters by itself as a socio-ideological marker. For instance, it is worth pondering that the compact bilingual pun on *arci/ἄρκει* (Suet. *Dom.* 13)³⁸ predicates precedence of alphabetic vision over phonetics. Yet even more telling are the linguistic and rhetorical similarities between the narrativised graffiti and pukka literary material. Thus the *arci/ἄρκει* joke is neatly paralleled in Cicero’s analysis of the naughty wordplay between the Latin *bini*, ‘two by two’ and the Greek *binei*, ‘s/he fucks’ (Cic. *Fam.* 9.22.3). The assimilation of Nero to the mythological matricides such as Orestes and Alcmaeon

(Cass. Dio 61/62.16.2a–b, cf. Suet. *Ner.* 39.2) is mirrored elsewhere by hostile elite commenters, for example the rebellious aristocrat C. Julius Vindex in Cassius Dio (63.22.6) and the exalted philosopher Apollonius of Tyana (Philostr. *V A.* 4.38.3). Perhaps the narrators' reticence on the social basis of subversive graffiti should not be taken at face value: the graffitists seem to be nourished on the same discursual resources as the elite textual performance. At first sight this plays into the hands of the argument that in the world of Roman societal humour class does not have decisive momentum (cf. Nippel 1995: 42). This may well be historically correct, but would this perception be valid also for the Greco-Roman historians as class-conscious cogitators—can the social and cultural situatedness of humour and dissent be written off once they have become literary products?

Arguably the most well-known cluster of political graffiti is found in the narrative of Brutus and Cassius' conspiracy against Julius Caesar. The major Greek sources all zoom in, with variations, on the obliquely inflammatory graffiti addressed to Brutus:

Those who desired the revolution (*hoi de tēs metabolēs ephimenoi*) viewed him [Brutus] as their only or their best hope. They did not dare to talk to him (*dialegesthai*) openly, but at night they left messages all over the rostra and the seat (*katepimplasan grammatōn to bēma kai ton diphron*) on which he conducted his duties as praetor. Most of these said “You're asleep, Brutus!” and “You are no Brutus”.

(Plut. *Caes.* 62.7; transl. R Waterfield, modified)

Brutus was challenged and urged into action by many arguments from friends, and the numerous tidings and written messages from the citizens (*pollais de phēmais kai grammasi . . . hoi politai*). For on the statue of his ancestor Brutus (the one who overthrew the kings), they were writing (*epegraphon*), “Oh that you were alive!” And Brutus' own tribunal as a praetor would be found every day filled with messages (*heurisketo meth' hēmeran anapleōn grammatōn*) such as “Brutus, you're asleep!” and “You are not the true Brutus!”

(Plut. *Brut.* 9.5–7)

. . . or whether, since he was a descendant of that Brutus of the olden time who had expelled the kings, he was provoked and shamed into this course mainly by the people (*hypo tou dēmou*). For on the statues of the ancient Brutus and on Brutus' own tribunal many suchlike things were secretly written (*epegrapheto lathrai*): “Brutus, are you bribed? Brutus, are you dead?” or “You should have been alive now!” or “Your posterity is unworthy of you” or “You are not *his* (*toude*) descendant”.

(App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112; transl. H. White, modified)

Finally on the statue of the ancient Brutus they [the commoners, cf. *hoi polloi* in 44.12.2] wrote (*epegrapsan*) “Would that you were alive!” and upon the tribunal of this Brutus (for he was a praetor and this is the name of the seat on which one sits giving judgement) “Brutus you’re asleep” and “You are no Brutus”.

(Cass. Dio 44.12.3; transl. E. Cary, modified)

Suetonius compresses the three episodes above into a single graffito yet includes a metrical inscription that tauntingly contrasts Caesar’s autocracy with the republicanism of Brutus the Ancestor.

Some wrote (*subscipsere quidam*) on the base of Lucius Brutus’ statue, “Oh that you were alive!”, and on that of Caesar himself: “Brutus was the first of consuls, ‘cause he drove out the kings; this man (*hic*) is at last made king ‘cause he drove out the consuls”.

(Suet. *Iul.* 80.3; transl. J. C. Rolfe, modified)

Across the cited passages we can diagnose several trademark features of ancient political graffitism. The act of writing is anonymous and furtive—at night (Plut. *Caes.* 62.7), ‘secretly’ (App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112: *lathrai*). Predictably, the graffiti swarm over surfaces responsible for generating the protagonists’ political persona. Second-person addresses and especially the deictic pronouns (Suet. *Iul.* 80.3: *hic*, App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112: *toude*) serve to intensify the text’s challenge of the legitimacy (honour, authority) projected by its *support formel*, such as the praetorial seat or the respective statue;³⁹ the voice of dissent poaches on the very materiality of the public transcript of power—a trend that is carried on into the principate (as shown above, Suet. *Ner.* 45.2, *Dom.* 13, *Aug.* 70). Notably, sleepiness as metaphor for political inertia is an idiom usable both by top-flight Roman oratory⁴⁰ and by the electoral graffiti of Pompeii.⁴¹ The pithy graffito that greets Plutarch’s and Dio’s Brutus in the morning is thus thoroughly traditional (Suetonius and Appian pass it over—too common, too cliché?), yet its gambit of quasi-orality is salient nonetheless: the question envisages itself as an audible outcry designed to break Brutus’ dormant attitude.

Brutus, Caesar and the overall showdown between the republic and autocracy hold a privileged place in the historiographical and moral reflection during the principate, when the dynamics of construing Rome’s remote and recent past is answerable, in one way or another, to the dominant ‘official’ meta-narrative (Gowing 2005: 4; cf. Sailor 2008: 9–10, 34–42 and *passim*). Under the Julio-Claudians politicised counter-reading of Caesar’s civil wars and assassination is known to have severe consequences (Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5; Suet. *Tib.* 61.3). Pressure visibly eases from the late first century onwards (e.g. Pliny *Ep.* 1.17.3), although the debate is anything but over: typological evaluation that straddles ethics and politics needs Caesar (his enemies too) as a litmus test of outlooks and, at

the end of the day, of compliance.⁴² Caesar's legacy to Rome was the de facto monarchy of the existing status quo (App. *Praef.* 22–4), and monarchy means better, more stable government than democracy (Cass. Dio 44.1.2–2.5). Or was Caesar rather the architect of cruel tyranny that his successors perpetuated (so G. Sentius Saturninus in Joseph. *AJ* 19.173–4)? Or maybe his power was a tyranny but one destined to cure Rome from the chaos of civil strife (Plut. *Caes.* 57.1, *Comp. Dion-Brut.* 2.2)—which Brutus and Cassius willy-nilly rekindle (Suet. *Otho* 10.1; Cass. Dio 44.1.1–2; Sen. *Ben.* 2.20.2)? From the civic viewpoint it can be argued that Caesar was ‘legally slain’ (Suet. *Iul.* 76.1: *iure caesus existimetur*),⁴³ and yet the murder itself comes across as transgressive—a ‘great sacrilege’ (App. *B Civ.* 2.17.118: *tosoude agous*) that ‘did not please’ the gods (Plut. *Caes.* 69.6: *sphagēn ou genomenēn theois arestēn*). It is evident that the drive for cross-examination of Caesar required mapping the republican resistance onto the archetypal, ethopoeic rather than mimetic template (Woolf 2007: 136 ‘enemies not of the Caesars so much as of vice’). Brutus’ conspiracy, or for that matter Cato’s suicide, make up modules from the ideological repertoire that the Greco-Roman elite were increasingly free to think with but scarcely invited to enact.

The graffitists of 44 BCE are thus players in a paradigmatic contest as well as signifiers within a contested paradigm. What kind of social profile do they represent in the eyes of imperial narrators? The seemingly uniform picture contains some interesting nuances. While Appian and Cassius Dio nod towards the Roman plebs (App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112: *hypo tou dēmou*, Cass. Dio 44.12.3: *hoi polloi*, cf. Plut. *Caes.* 62.1), Plutarch’s *Life of Brutus* chooses the more dignified⁴⁴ cross-social ‘citizens’ (Plut. *Brut.* 9.5–7: *hoi politai*). These texts therefore situate the graffiti in the popular sector of Rome’s society. This is the case of the masses or indeed the whole community writing back to the odious regime;⁴⁵ Brutus will awake into action as the friend of the people.⁴⁶ Suetonius also speaks of the people being ‘not happy’ and critical about Caesar: they ‘both secretly and openly railed against the dictatorship and called for deliverers’ (*Iul.* 80.1: *ne populo quidem . . . laeto sed clam palamque detrectante dominationem atque assertores flagitante*). The Suetonian graffiti-writers are, however, somewhat diminished by their nondescript plurality (*Iul.* 80.3: *quidam*). Even chillier is ‘they who desired the revolution’ in the Plutarchan *Caesar* (62.7: *hoi de tēs metabolēs ephimenoi*)—a mindset that few, if any, narratives under the principate would recommend out loud to their readers. Likewise the collective sentiment of *politai* is hardly the definitive ethico-political benchmark (e.g. Plut. *Caes.* 69.1). The irony is that the ultimate people’s man (*dēmotikōtatos*) was in fact Caesar (App. *B Civ.* 1.1.4).

The graffitists’ message and tactics are not an open-and-shut case, then. In Plutarch’s *Brutus*, where the conspirators’ perspective is understandably given precedence (Pelling 2002: 6; 2009b: 510, 522), and in Appian the graffiti are framed as a sustained propaganda campaign (Plut. *Brut.* 9.5–7:

epegraphon, *bēma* . . . *heurisketo*, App. *B Civ.* 2.16.112: *epegrapheto* versus the aorists in Plut. *Caes.* 62.7 and Cass. Dio 44.12.3 quoted above, page 124–5). The conspirator Cassius helpfully interprets it as the effort of the Roman elite rather than of the working classes:

Or do you think that it is weavers and shopkeepers writing on your tribunal (*to bēma sou* . . . *katagraphein tous hyphantas kai tous kapēlous*) rather than the foremost and most influential men (*prōtous kai kratistous*) . . . ?

(Plut. *Brut.* 10.6)

Or do you think it is the artisans and shopkeepers who write anonymously on your tribunal (*cheirotechnai kai kapēloi katagraphein sou to dikastērion asēmōs*) rather than the best (*aristoi*) of Romans . . . ?

(App. *B Civ.* 2.16.113)

In a remarkable U-turn from the passages quoted on pages 124–5 the graffiti are reclaimed by the aristocracy casting themselves as the group who truly care about liberty and the constitution; the banausic commoners are not—cannot be—entitled to such a lofty agenda. Suggestively, as the conspiracy narrative nears its climax on the Ides of March references to documentary (as opposed to parietal) literacy and its paraphernalia multiply—Artemidorus’ letter fails to warn,⁴⁷ the assassins’ daggers are concealed in their portfolios (Cass. Dio 44.16.1: *en kibōtiois anti grammateiōn tinōn*), and the ambushed Caesar defends himself with a stylus (Suet. *Iul.* 82.2: *graphio*). See further Zadorojnyi 2005: 132–3; 2006: 376). We are firmly in the world of elite bureaucratic writing because tyrannicide is a fight for which the elite used to have copyright. Not to forget Cicero’s colourful comment in the aftermath of the Ides that configures the assassination in explicitly writerly and theatrical terms:

I would have removed from the state not only the despot, but despotism as such, and if that stylus (*stilus ille*), as they say, would have been mine—believe me, I would have completed the whole drama (*totam fabulam*), not just one act.

(Cic. *Phil.* 2.34)

This is the sort of textuality that Cicero and his audience would read into the anti-Caesarian conspiracy.⁴⁸ Graffiti do not belong here either practically or generically. It is salient that writing on Brutus’ tribunal and the statues is never mentioned in any Ciceronian text from the period;⁴⁹ Cicero’s Brutus gets patriotic inspiration from the ancestor’s *imago* itself (Cic. *Phil.* 2.26), not from the words graffitied over it. There could be, of course, plausible reasons behind Cicero’s silence about the graffiti of 44 BCE, for example his well-grounded worry about contingencies of epistolary traffic

(Nicholson 1994; Jenkins 2006: 37–50). But perhaps it is a question of gaze too. Contemporary graffiti are more likely to be caught between political qualms and cultural classism. In effect, Cicero may have been anxious to mind the gap—after all, the ‘artisans and shopkeepers’ of Appian (*B Civ.* 2.16.113) are precisely the people he elsewhere brackets with ‘all that filth of the cities’ (Cic. *Flac.* 18: *opifices et tabernarios atque illam omnem faecem civitatum*). To quote again Plutarch’s formula against reading off walls and tombs, ‘nothing useful or pleasant is written over there’ (page 114 above), because ‘useful and pleasant’ (noble, witty . . .) discourse is the prerogative of the elite who rarely admit to writing on walls.

The Brutus-graffiti enjoy a high recycling rate in the narrative sources not least due to the strong ethopoeic expectations about this historical scenario. These graffiti have become *monumenta* of sorts. At the same time the lack of consensus about their social base, and hence ideological credentials, bespeaks the axial tension in the Greco-Roman elite literates’ response to graffiti in general and to the politically subversive graffiti in particular. The literary reportage of graffiti oscillates between fascination, misgivings and crucially the tendency to engage this popular-but-not-really communication without fully enfranchising it—an elastic or maybe schizophrenic strategy which is consistent with the procedures at work in the non-political texts. Just as elite literary aesthetics has its savvy recipes for dipping into the allegedly moronic and/or foul-mouthed everyday graffiti (see above pages 115–7), so imperial historiography narrates episodes of graffitised dissent but is careful not to celebrate it as the normative format of elite’s resistance. The blunt candour of Gaius Cassius (Plut. *Brut.* 10.6; App. *B Civ.* 2.16.113) is seriously exceptional, but then 44 BCE is an exceptional, ‘bottleneck’ (Woolf 2007: 93) moment of Rome’s history.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to show that the narrativisation of graffiti in the elite-oriented genres such as imperial historiography and biography exposes a faultline in the ancient concept of literate culture as a political medium. By releasing satire and anti-tyrannical slogans into the urban space graffiti empowers dissent (in which the elite are the foremost stakeholders, see James 2000: 278–93), however, the socio-cultural and political otherness imputed to graffiti leaves the upper-class literates wary of identifying or too closely engaging with such risky practices. The Greco-Roman elites affect a lukewarm attitude towards graffiti on intellectual and aesthetic grounds, yet also indulge in shrewdly humorous experiments with this material (Plut. *Gryllus* 990E; Martial 12.61). An analogous process is going on in historico-political writing where graffiti are typically brought forth as evidence of widespread resentment against a bad emperor. Even though the sparkle and stylistic apparatus of the quoted inscriptions align rather well

with competent literacy, the sources seem reluctant to lay the authorship of such graffiti and/or posters at the door of the elite.⁵⁰ The bugbear of rabble-rousing and destabilising the political order from the bottom upwards⁵¹ is the endemic constraint upon the imperial upper-class consciousness; aristocrats and philosophers are expected to oppose the tyrant, not to stir the masses. Besides, writing that enters the public domain secretly and anonymously, literally ‘without signing’ (App. *B Civ.* 2.16.113: *asēmōs*) cannot help being alien to the code of aristocratic self-assertion.

The counter-hegemonic transcript under the empire unfolds onto a spectrum— or better a sliding scale— that stretches from the politics of rebellion and assassination (Vindex, Brutus) to the tentative infrapolitics of toilet drollery (Lucan, Dr Apollinaris). Along the length of the spectrum the Greco-Roman elite find themselves picking from a range of written-oral technologies. There was the steep path of authoring politically confrontational texts, taken famously by the historian Cremutius Cordus who ‘proscribed the proscribers for all eternity’ (Sen. *Ad Marc.* 6.26.1: *proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit*).⁵² Another option was recital of satire in a dinner-party setting (Tac. *Ann.* 14.48). Better still, one could wear the hat of philosophical *parrhēsia*— so Dio of Prusa claims to have been a valiant and prolific critic of Domitian:

defying without disguise (*antikrýs*) and not, by Zeus, planning to speak now or to write about the evils at hand, but having already spoken and written, these speeches and scripts are everywhere (*pantachou tōn logōn kai tōn grammatōn ontōn*).

(Dio Chrys. 45.1)

Top-ranking statesmen might grab the opportunity to make vocal threats (retrospectively) against the emperor’s life (Cass. Dio 59.30.2) or portray one’s silence towards tyrannical intimidation as a feint of dissent— Cassius Dio describes himself chewing laurel leaves from his own crown so as not to laugh at Commodus (72.21.2). Implements of literacy provide further hands-on solutions: stylus and tablets could be thrown in the emperor’s face (Suet. *Claud.* 15.4) but, equally, real daggers are smugglable into the curia in stationery-boxes (Cass. Dio 44.16.1).

The safest way to handle dissident action is of course to study it through texts. Graffiti in the ancient historical narration constitute an avenue for trying out the potentialities of written dissent while staying cushioned by the orthodox socio-cultural prejudice, as well as by the chronological distance.⁵³ Rather like Sostratus the architect (Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 62), Suetonius, Plutarch, Dio and others unlock political graffiti from the past for their readers. But the genie of subversive graffiti is not quite out of the bottle, because in the present graffiti have no legitimate semantics, political or otherwise, among the elite—for the record, anyway: whatever that literate and rhetorically mischievous individual who wrote ‘Fucked was

the Roman Citizens' pussy' (CIL 4.1261 above) was thinking of, cannot be known. The bona fide *pepaideumenoī* were not to admit to creating or noticing such texts anyhow. Their motto, and cop-out on wall-writing ought to have been the innocently waggish graffito from the imperial compound of Domus Tiberiana on the Palatine:⁵⁴

Much was inscribed [here] by many, I alone inscribed nothing (*polloi polla epegrapsan, egō monos outi egrapsa*).

(Castrén-Lilius 1970: no. 70)

NOTES

- * I am grateful to the volume's editors and the anonymous referee for their subtle suggestions. Special thanks are due to Christopher Pelling. Translations are my own unless otherwise specified.
- 1. Comparanda galore: e.g. Gan Bustos 1978; Bushnell 1990; Peteet 1996; Austin 2001; Macdonald 2002; Poueyto 2005; Gavin 2007; Iveson 2007: esp. 116–17, 136–7. The best theoretical essay is still Stewart 1987.
- 2. 'la structure d'accueil des inscriptions, l'ensemble des règles topologiques d'orientation, de dimension, de proportion et de segmentation, notamment, qui vont contraindre et faire signifier les caractères inscrits.'
- 3. Based on this logic, a 'NO TRESPASSING' sign crudely daubed over the fence or an impromptu epitaph executed by a non-professional in the wilderness (e.g. Xen. Eph. 3.2.13 'there and then (*par'auton ekeinon ton kairon*) I put an inscription onto the monument of the hapless youth') must not be regarded as graffiti, since their writers were in control of the site. For further discussion of this see Chaniotis, pages 193–6.
- 4. More in Rohan 1988; also <http://www.bopsecrets.org/French/graffiti.htm> (accessed 16 March 2010).
- 5. See Reisner 1971: 13–17; www.kilroywashere.org (accessed 16 March 2010). For a historicist account of Kilroy, see Skilling 1963.
- 6. Cf. Huskinson 2000; Whitmarsh 2008: 72–6; Toner 2009: 3; generally Morgan 1998: 4, 23–4, 64–88, 150–1, 267–70.
- 7. For optimistic polemics against Harris' defeatism see e.g. Franklin 1991.
- 8. Suet. *Vita Luc.* lines 17–20, p. 147 Rostagni: 'once in a public toilet when his bowels made a loud noise he recited, causing those around to flee, a half line of Nero: "You might think it thundered under earth"' (transl. J.C. Rolfe).
- 9. Cugusi 1985b: 27–8; Helttula 1995: 155; Varone 2002: 84–5 with n. 134.
- 10. So cautiously Adams 1982: 116; to his array of evidence must be added Mart. 3.74.6 and Gell. 1.5.3.
- 11. For example, Helttula 1995: 146–7; her analysis leaves much to be desired.
- 12. It is imperative to apply Ockham's razor whenever possible; for example Varro, *Rust.* 3.1.10: *ni tuis quoque litteris exornati parietes essent*, 'unless the walls [of the villa] are also decorated with your texts' turns out to be a reference not to wall-writing but to the contents of bookcases.
- 13. See, for example, Koortbojian 1996; Valette-Cagnac 1997: 73–109; Zanker 1998: 76–7; generally Woolf 1996.
- 14. Compare Aulus Gellius, 9.4.11–12 for a similarly phrased repudiation of books containing ethnographic mirabilia: 'I read these and many other [stories] of this sort. But as I was copying them out, the maladroitness that

had no bearing on refinement or profit of life felt loathsome to me' (*tenuit nos non idoneae scripturae taedium nihil ad ornandum iuvandumque usum vitae pertinentis*).

15. 'X is *kalos*' is staple vocabulary of Greek homoerotics: Dover 1989: 112–22; Taylor in this volume.
16. The joke is lost on Buckler 1992: 4797–8 who thinks that Plutarch fails to authenticate the inscription. On the manipulation of Homeric details in the *Gryllus*, see Fernández Delgado 2000: 173–4.
17. On the eccentricity and traditionalism of *recusatio* in Martial see Nauta 2006: 37–40.
18. For comparable reading of *urbicus* in Mart. 1.61, see e.g. Citroni 1975: 134 and Fitzgerald 2007: 178; yet see also the guarded comments by Howell (1980: 196–7).
19. On faeces as a motif in the Roman elite's perception of the 'foul' masses see Toner 2009: 127–9.
20. Cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 3.21.6; Henderson 2002: 54.
21. Rimell (2008) does not discuss 12.61, but her comment (at 209) that Martial 'does his best to ruin Latin literature [. . .] dumbing down, graffiti-ing over' traditions and genres is certainly à propos.
22. If these are indeed casual, graffiti-style texts: so Beard 1991: 40, n. 9, following Veyne 1967: 738–9. Sherwin-White 1966: 458 takes the conservative line arguing that *multa . . . inscripta* is shorthand for votive plaques.
23. On the amiable ethos promoted by Pliny's *Epistles*, see e.g. Bell 1990; Morello 2007.
24. Cf. Artemid. 4.31: 'the emperor [. . .] and the emperor's letter [. . .] signify each other' (*hyp' allēlōn sēmainetai*).
25. E.g. Herodian 3.11.9; Petr. *Sat.* 1.3; Tac. *Agr.* 45.2; further Zadorojnyi (2006).
26. *CIL* 4.1939: *Pum[pei]s fueere quondam Vibii opulentissimi non ideo tenuerunt in manu sceptrum pro mutunio itidem quod tu factitas cottidie in manu penem tene(n)s*. 'At Pompeii the Vibii were most wealthy once—not for this did they hold a sceptre in their hand instead of a cock, which is what you keep at daily holding a penis in your hand'. Cugusi 1985b: 28; Cupaiuolo 1993: 91–2.
27. Traditionally the scholars' favourite example of political gripe on the Pompeian walls is *CIL* 4.8075: *Cucuta ab ra[t]ioni[b]us Neronis Augusti*, 'the finance minister of Nero Caesar, Poison' (?!); MacMullen 1966: 40; Funari 2000: 517; Miles 2000: 44; Toner 2009: 181; also *CIL* 4.9099: *Sulla felix infelix*, 'Sulla the Lucky? the Unlucky!'; I for one am not sure these clipped sentences qualify for far-reaching politicised reading. A stronger case is *CIL* 4.6893: *Caesaris Augusti femina mater erat*, 'the mother of Augustus Caesar was a woman'; Cugusi 1985b: 23–5; Cupaiuolo 1993: 87. See also Clarke 2007: 152–8. *CIL* 4.3407.6 tallies with Suet. *Dom.* 14.2 yet predates the Suetonian context. On *CIL* 4.1261 see above, pages 112–3.
28. On the Plutarchan equation of the Roman plebs with a Greek-style demos see Pelling 2002: 211–18; for Plutarch's classist take on the demos *tout à fait*, see Saïd 2005.
29. For the historical context see Hoff 2005: 61; on the ethico-politics of epigraphy in Plutarch see recently Liddell 2008.
30. To Corbier (2006: 71) the Roman graffiti amount to the public's *contre-communication* with imperial monuments and the power behind them.
31. Cf. James 2000: 294: ' . . . no space exists for resistance to occur unless it is in the very space generated by domination and already occupied by the symbols the resistance is seeking to desecrate and appropriate.'

32. The standard formula of Roman divorce: Treggiari 1991: 446–7.
33. Cf. also Cicero on the notoriety of Verres' mistress Pipa (Verr. 2.3.77): 'whose name [. . .] was broadcast (*pervulgatum*) throughout Sicily; very many verses were being written about this woman all over the tribunal and above the praetor's very head (*supra tribunal et supra praetoris caput scribebantur*)'.
34. See further Veyne 1983: 13–14; Cupaiuolo 1993: 80; Horsfall 2003: 37–8, 41–2; Corbier 2006: 71–3. Signally, anti-smear legislation under the empire does not differentiate between written and oral *infamia*: cf. Suet. Aug. 55: 'those who published, under a false name, pamphlets or verses to anybody's discredit' (*qui libellos aut carmina ad infamiam cuiuspiam sub alieno nomine edant*) and *Digesta*, 47.10.15.27 'if someone writes a song or exhibits it or sings anything which offends against a person's decency' (*aut si carmen conscribat vel proponat vel cantet aliquod quod pudorem alicuius laedat*).
35. Such as the Roman soldiers' chants during the triumphal celebration: Suet. *Iul.* 49.4, 51.
36. On the Roman persistent fantasy about Corinthian bronzeware see Henderson 2002: 189–92.
37. A splendid instance of creative manoeuvring of a graffito by a top republican orator is passed down in Cicero's *De oratore* 2.240. L. Licinus Crassus is said to recount having seen 'the letters L.L.L.M.M. inscribed on every wall in Tarracina' (*tota Tarracina . . . omnibus in parietibus inscriptas fuisse litteras L. L. L. M. M.*); at his request an old local (*senem . . . quendam oppidianum*) deciphers the acronym as *lacerat lacertum Largi mordax Memmius*, "biter Memmius mauls Largus' arm". Memmius' volatile character is of course the target of Crassus' ridicule which he backs up with deadpan spoof translation of graffiti. It is significant, I think, that the orator poses as outsider (albeit inquisitive one) of the code of this graffitied iambic 'testimony'.
38. The suggestion by Fredrick 2003: 222 that the pun extends to the Greek verb *archei*, 'he rules' is far-fetched, although his inference ('the connection between the emperor's political power and his control of space through architecture') cannot be faulted.
39. Or more broadly the *lieu formel*: whereas Appian and Cassius Dio apparently describe graffiti rather than billets (the latter are discussed separately by Dio in 44.12.1), the Plutarchan phrasing in *Caes.* 62.7 is more ambiguous, and the late epitomator Zonaras has 'the people [. . .] drop letters at night' around Brutus' tribunal (*Epit.* 10.11 vol. 2 p. 369: *hoi polloi* [. . .] *nyktōr de grammata* [. . .] *erriptoun*). The Suetonian statues of Lucius Brutus and Caesar are presumably those that stood next to each other on the Capitol (Cass. Dio 43.45.4).
40. Cic. *In Pis.* 10: 'Can there be any excuse for a consul who [. . .] is idle, procrastinating, and asleep (*sedenti, cunctanti, dormienti . . . consuli*) in the midst of the greatest upheaval in the republic?' and Cato in Sall. *Cat.* 52.5 'wake up (*expergiscimini*) once in a while and take the state in hand!'
41. *CIL* 4.575 (a snipe at the electorate: *rogant . . . dormientes universi*), and 4.7464; cf. also 4.1190, 4.2974 (context quite uncertain), 4.2993t, 4.3718.
42. Seminal discussion is Rawson 1986; see also MacMullen 1966: 18–21, 28–33; Pelling 1997; 2002: 253–65; 2006: 7–15; 2009a; 2009b; Rudich 1997: 22–3, 52–9, 118–27; Roller 2001: 37–8, 62–3, 176–88, esp. 250–1; Mason 2003: 560, 585–6; Toher 2006; Walde 2006: 45–54; Woolf 2007: 134–6, 139—the list can go on.
43. On the Suetonian idiom see Pelling 2006: 22–3.
44. But pointedly not for Caesar's soldiers for whom being addressed as 'citizens' is equal to disapproval: Plut. *Caes.* 51.2 'he reproached them [. . .] having

called them “citizens” instead of “soldiers” (*epetimēse* [. . .] *anti stratiōtōn politas prosagoreusai*), cf. Suet. *Iul.* 70.

45. Cf. Suet. *Ner.* 45.2 where graffiti spring up on the emperor’s statues because he is now universally hated (*omnium in se odio incitato*).
46. Pelling 2002: 213 notes that Cassius Dio labels Brutus and Cassius as ‘people-lovers’, (*dēmerastai*: 47.38.3). Their political vision is still categorically condemned by Dio (44.1.2–2.1, 44.2.5).
47. Almost a trope of tyrannical demise: cf. Aen. Tact. 31.33 (Astyanax of Lampsacus) and Plut. *De gen.* 596E–F, *Pel.* 10.7–10, *Quaest. conv.* 619D–E (Archias of Thebes).
48. Zadorojnyi 2005: 116. Pushing it further, the blood of Caesar over the pedestal of Pompey’s statue in the curia (Plut. *Caes.* 66.13) could be metaphorised as the ink of the script of anti-tyrannical vengeance.
49. Contrast the vivid description of C. Verres’ tribunal (Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.77) and the playful interpretation of the (electoral?) graffiti at Tarracina (Cic. *De orat.* 2.240). See generally Horfsall 2003: 23.
50. Apart from Plutarch *Brut.* 10.6 and Appian *B Civ.* 2.16.113 a late (and retrospective) exception is Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 5.8.2: ‘ . . . consul Ablabius seems to have stabbed or rather sunk his teeth (*vel pupugisse . . . vel momordisse*) into Constantine’s family and life with this distich posted secretly on the gates of the Palatine (*clam Palatinis foribus appenso*)’ (transl. W. B. Anderson, modified). Elsewhere the tendency is to dissociate the elite from subversive writing on walls: e.g. Cassius Dio 55.27.1–2 describes how authorship of anti-Augustan leaflets ‘that got posted at night in great numbers’ (*pleiō de dē biblia nyktōr exetithesan*) was falsely ascribed to one Plautius Rufus, a man mentioned also by Suetonius as a conspirator—yet not a writer! —against Augustus (*Aug.* 19.1).
51. Cf. Vespasian’s opinion of Helvidius Priscus as spelled out by Cass. Dio 66.12.2: ‘bonding with the canaille [. . .] agitation of the mob and corrosion of the established regime’ (*tōi ochlōi prosekeito* [. . .] *to ta plēthē tarattein to te ta kathestēkota sygchein*). Appreciably, Helvidius is accused of spreading anti-autocratic discontent orally, not via graffiti. This die-hard elite dissident is known to have defied the emperor through the medium of government documentation (Suet. *Vesp.* 15) —but wall-writing is utterly beyond the pale. The nightmare of writing teamed up with radical extremism is adumbrated in the story of one Titus Curtius, an ex-praetorian guard who in CE 24 tried to incite a slave uprising in rural Apulia by ‘having openly posted placards where he called for freedom’ (Tac. *Ann.* 4.27: *mox positis propalam libellis in libertatem vocabat*); the rebellion was nipped in the bud ‘almost thanks to divine providence’ (*velut munere deum*).
52. Further Sailor 2008: 276–82, 287; Alston 2008: 152–3.
53. My interpretation is therefore not far off from the embattled argument of Frederick Ahl about the ancient writers’ recourse to subtextual criticism of the powerful (Ahl 1984: 186–208) —yet with emphasis on ethopoeic reflection and suspense rather than specifically on ‘criticism’. Imperial literati know too well that even seemingly timeless rhetoric, e.g. declaiming ‘against tyrants’ (*kata tyrannōn*), could still be punishable (Cass. Dio 59.20.6).
54. With more variants from elsewhere: Langner 2001: 21 with n. 82, n. 85.

7 The Materiality of Graffiti

Socialising a Lekythos in Pherai*

Katerina Volioti

INTRODUCTION

Some time in the early fifth century BCE a person incised two signs under the base of a small Attic lekythos. The lekythos is kept today in the Archaeological Museum of Volos in central Greece (Volos K3335–178), but the short graffiti for a long time went unnoticed by scholars. It was not mentioned in the description of the vase in the museum archives; indeed the inventory number was drawn in black ink on top of the graffiti overlooking its presence (Figure 7.1). This chapter will investigate this graffiti and the ways in which it can be understood. It will examine how physical interaction with the graffiti and the surface on which it appears affects its reading, use and interpretation.

According to the archives of the Archaeological Museum of Volos, the lekythos was found together with a second lekythos (Volos K3335–177) in a grave (T.24) at Pherai, modern Velestino, during salvage operations in 1970. These operations were connected to the construction of an athletic centre in the area of the southeast cemetery of the city (Chrysostomou 1998: 210; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1994: 72).

The lekythos is, in itself, unremarkable in terms of style or provenance, but it can be used as a case study to highlight a number of broader issues which arise concerning the materiality and contexts of the socialisation of writing. The subsequent discussion, therefore, falls into three parts. Firstly, I will discuss the content of the graffiti. Given comparanda of other ceramic graffiti, is it possible to describe this graffiti as a commercial notation, as a claim of ownership, or does it belong to some other category? Secondly, I will investigate the graffiti in terms of the material attributes of the lekythos as an object. The small size and slender shape of the vessel served as the immediate context of this graffiti and therefore prompt discussion of how the graffiti could be socialised during instances of handling (such as carrying, moving and rotating the vessel, holding the pot in the clasp of one's hand and touching or sensing its textural surfaces). As will be seen, my interpretation of how the incised object was used draws especially from theories relating to the materiality of the human body and can be extended to provide a

framework for elucidating contexts of graffiti consumption. Thirdly, I shall examine the marked lekythos in its ancient geographical and cultural setting and contextualise it within contemporary Thessalian society.

READING THE GRAFFITO

The lekythos, which measures 20.2 cm in height, 5.9 cm across the shoulder and 4.5 cm across the base, has survived intact except for a crack across its neck. The figural scene has been painted and incised with little attention to detail and it is therefore possible only to suggest, by comparison to similar scenes on other vases, that the lekythos shows a bearded Dionysos, seated on a stool (Figure 7.2). He holds a drinking cup with raised handle in side view, and is flanked by two standing heavily-draped figures who



Figure 7.1 Graffito reading *iota-nu* from right to left looking anticlockwise on the underfoot of an Attic lekythos. Volos K3335–178, (c. 475–450 BCE), Pherai. Photo by author.

may represent dancing maenads. From Dionysos' body emerge four vine branches with dotted leaves.¹ Based on the style of drawing, iconographic theme and vessel shape, especially the long chimney-like neck, I would attribute the lekythos to the Haimon Group and date it to the second quarter of the fifth century. The other small black-figured lekythos found with this one may, I believe, also relate to the Haimonian workshop (Haspels 1936: 130–41; Kurtz 1975: 87, 150–3).² The pinkish-orange clay fabric and the shiny black glaze suggest that the marked lekythos from Pherai is an Attic import rather than a local imitation.³

The graffito under the foot of the lekythos consists of two post-firing signs, which most likely represent letters (Figure 7.1). Although at first glance one may read the letters as *sigma* and *chi*, the most likely reading of the graffito, running from right to left (retrograde), is an *iota* followed by a reversed *nu*.⁴ We should not be surprised to find retrograde writing on a

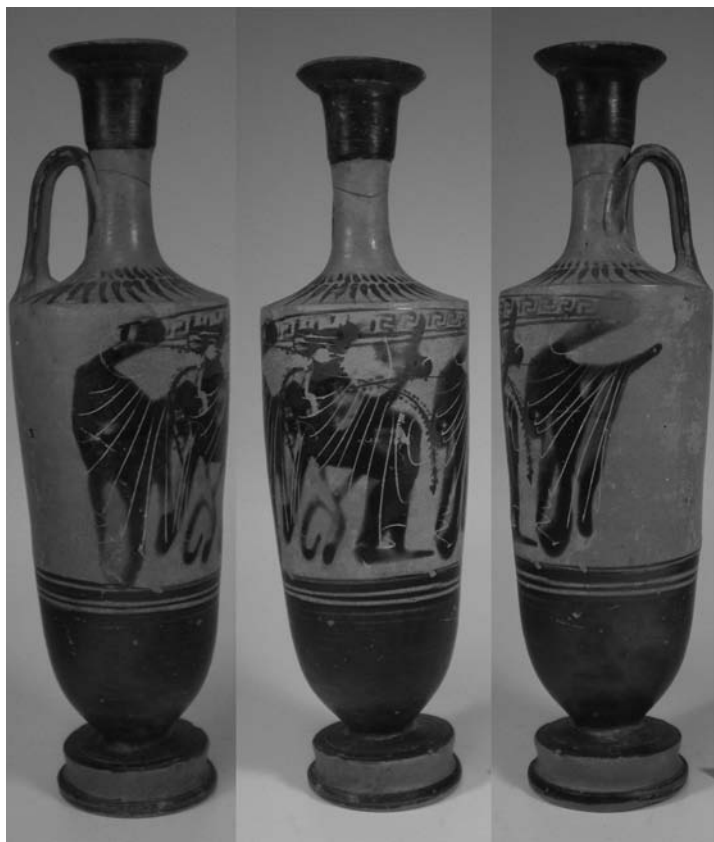


Figure 7.2 Seated Dionysos between two standing maenads. Volos K3335–178, c. 475–450 BCE, Pherai. Photo by author.

fifth-century pot: graffiti on fragments from the Athenian agora show that this was not uncommon in the fifth century (Lang 1976: 25).

Close examination of the vessel supports the reading of the first letter as an *iota* (instead of *chi*). The stroke for the *iota*, slanting to the left, is crossed diagonally by another incision (wider and more shallow compared to the two letters) that continues to the edge of the base. This is an additional incision: it was cut with the use of a different implement after the *iota* had already been written (Figure 7.1).⁵ If the incision is not an accidental scratch but a deliberate mark (possibly by a different hand), it may be a direct acknowledgement of the presence of the two letters. Incised lines running across the underfoot of Greek vases were sometimes added to existing graffiti, as exemplified by Johnston's commercial mark type 18Ciii, but this trademark does not appear on lekythoi (although it appears on shapes such as kraters, hydriai and stamnoi. See Johnston 1979: 111–14; 2006: 98–100). In any case, what is clear is that this incision is not part of a letter, such as *chi*, and the letter should therefore be read as *iota*.

Similarly, the side of the *nu* closest to the *iota* has a tail extending towards the conical indentation at the centre of the base. This tail, which is thin and shallow compared to the grooves of the *nu*, is an accidental side-effect of writing on the hard clay surface. As such, one can say with some confidence that it is a secondary incision and not part of the *nu*.

Inverted *nus* appear in Thessaly as well as elsewhere in the Greek world. Most notably, a Thessalian funerary stone inscription from the village of Gardiki, dated to the first half of the fifth century, features two inverted *nus* typographically unlike each other. It is inconclusive whether the letter forms in this inscription follow the Thessalian script or are borrowings from the neighbouring regions of Locris and Phocis but, either way, *nu* is not one of the regionally distinctive letters (Matthaïou 2006: 51, 54). An inverted *nu* was used for *beta* in Melos and Selinous (Jeffery 1990: 308, 262). Phrygian *upsilon* looked like an inverted *nu*, as shown on sixth-century ceramic graffiti from Gordion (Roller 1987: fig. 28–9). The unique occurrence of inverted *nu* in the decree of Mantinea, dated to the first half of the fifth century, is a local Arcadian invention for which a number of readings and pronunciations have been proposed (Duhoux 2006: 20, 50, 63–4). A concentration of inverted *nu* in Laconia is apparent from stone inscriptions and dedications incised on bronze vessels (Larfeld 1907: table iii; Jeffery 1990: 198, no. 5; 447, no. 51a).

Despite these regional variations, *nu* was written inconsistently even within the same inscription, and its form cannot serve as a secure indicator of provenance (Jeffery 1990: 31, 183). Painted inscriptions on Attic vases also confirm the inconsistent writing of *nu* and the coexistence of inverted and non-inverted forms on the same vase (Immerwahr 1990: 152). From these considerations, it is unclear whether the graffiti was incised in Attica, in Pheraï or in some other place in between. The graffiti, most importantly, cannot be dated independently but is reliant on the stylistic dating of the

lekythos. This fact highlights the salience of the pot in understanding the graffito, a point emphasised throughout this chapter.

READINGS, MEANINGS AND NON-VERBAL MARKS

If the graffito is read as *iota-nu* how then can we understand this mark? There are a number of options. It is tempting to associate short graffiti such as this with the vase trade, given the distribution of Haimonian lekythoi across the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Jubier-Galinier 2003: 85). The combination of the letters *iota* and *nu*, painted or incised onto pots, has indeed been recognised as a commercial notation (trademark), and classified as type 15B, examples of which are found on lekythoi as well as on other pottery shapes (Johnston 1979: 197).⁶ These short marks, cryptic to the wider public, were important as a communication code shared by producers and marketers of Greek vases. The graffito from Pherai is, in very general terms, most similar to Johnston's type 15Bii. The inverted *nu*, however, makes the graffito stand apart and hence look unlike type 15B (Johnston *pers. comm.*). In fact, there are no direct parallels for this graffito within the body of known trademarks, which, moreover, decline during the period in which our lekythos is thought to have been manufactured (Johnston 2006: 29). Nonetheless, the graffito could still have a commercial meaning, perhaps as a batch marking on a master vessel for a selection of pots, and as such could constitute evidence for the northwards circulation of Attic pottery as indicated by recently published batch graffiti from the North Aegean (Johnston 1979: 48; 2006: 11–12).⁷

The graffito may have been an abbreviated personal name. These are usually interpreted as ownership marks and tend to remain unpublished given their many possible readings (Lang 1976: 1, 26). This may explain, in part at least, why owners' graffiti appear scarce on small late black-figured lekythoi in spite of the massive number of surviving vessels.⁸ In the Athenian Agora, for example, published deposits of clearance debris from the aftermath of the Persian destruction contained many such lekythoi, none of which feature any graffiti, of ownership or otherwise (Vanderpool 1946; Roberts and Glock 1986; Shear 1993).⁹ Only two early fifth-century lekythoi fragments from the Athenian Agora bear individuals' names: F44 with its graffito reading 'Tyrsanos', an ethnic adjective (Lang 1976: 32),¹⁰ and F72, on which the name 'Mikion' is incised under the base. This fragment was found beneath the Hephaisteion, and attributed to the Emporion Painter whose lekythoi were stylistically similar to Haimonian lekythoi (Haspels 1936: 130, 165; Dinsmoor 1941: 142–4, no. 38; Lang 1976: 34).

If the graffito from Pherai refers to an owner, then from the few personal names beginning with *iota-nu*, one could read Inna (as found in Thessaly in the third century: *LGN IIIb*: 207), Inōn or Indas (as known

from fourth-century Epirus and Macedonia respectively; *LGPN* IIIa: 220; IV: 174). In addition, an incised *iota-nu* running orthograde on the outside wall of an Attic early fifth-century black-glazed cup from Samothrace has also been interpreted as the initials of somebody's name (Dusenbery 1998: 1152–3, no. XS–544). A further comparison could be made with a Haimonian lekythos featuring an underfoot post-firing graffito 'Lykas' in non-Attic script.¹¹ Although the provenance of this lekythos is unknown, the female name Lyka, common for a courtesan, is suggestive of the Doric colonies in Sicily (Simon 1989: 73, no. 132). An ownership statement may have been pertinent on imported pottery far away from Athens.

Pictorial graffiti on Attic pottery, including sketches of humans, have not been systematically studied, but interpreted as curiosities or whimsical expressions (Vanderpool 1946: 278; Lang 1976: 94; 1988: 6–7, 11–13). There is scope, however, to consider a possible continuum between pictorial and non-alphabetic graffiti that include a wide range of patterns (crosses, lattices and hour-glass signs) occurring on complete pots and commonly explained as illiterate owners' marks (Roller 1987: 8; Vanhove 2006: 4–5). One might see our graffito placed within this continuum.

Painted vase inscriptions sometimes comprise rows of letter-like signs that cannot be read as words but are meaningful for their graphic effect (Lissarrague 1990: 128). Such seemingly nonsensical painted inscriptions are particularly common amongst small late black-figured lekythoi, and occur on other examples from Thessaly (Volos BE36645, unpublished: this Attic lekythos of ca. 480, excavated in Volos, has a row of painted dots emulating the visual impact of a string of letters).¹² Irrespective of their content, such painted inscriptions were integral to vase painting traditions. This shaped a culture of seeing optical illusions as writing.

By contrast, graffiti, like our example, have been overwhelmingly associated with the production, selling or ownership of pottery and hence considered functional rather than visual marks. As with painted nonsensical inscriptions, however, non-verbal graffiti could also relate to the vogue of writing or its imitations. In the same way in which the vase user was familiar with encountering non-verbal painted marks in the pictorial field, he or she might also expect to see non-verbal graffiti inscribed on the underside of such lekythoi.

The underside of pots served as the commonest location for commercial as well as ownership and non-verbal graffiti (Johnston 1979: 5; 2006: 3; Lang 1976: 28; Vanhove 2006: 4).¹³ In the case of lekythoi this implies stacking for transport bottom-up, presumably as empty vessels, which suggests that they were exported as containers and not as packages of (perfumed) oil. What is more, these marks could be visible during the emptying and storing of lekythoi in daily life. In general, potters shaped the underside of any lekythos with care because it would be seen when oil was poured (Schreiber 1999: 174). Visibility of underfoot graffiti then cannot be associated exclusively with cargo and transit considerations. As a trademark, the

graffito from Pherai would be comprehensible only to pottery dealers, yet its underfoot location would still make it noticeable to other users of the vessel, even if this was routinely ignored.

The result is that even though the exact reading of the graffito remains unresolved (for us), it was not devoid of meaning. The scarcity of Greek words and personal names beginning with *iota-nu* might indicate that the graffito from Pherai was a non-verbal mark consisting of a single stroke and three linked ones. At a later stage another incision would have been added on top of the first stroke, although it is not clear exactly when and why this was the case. While it may not be possible to 'read' all these incisions, they still produce a combined visual effect that emulates letter shapes or a zigzag pattern. Notwithstanding its idiosyncratic nature, the creation of this graffito was part of wider cultural habits of etching commercial, ownership or non-verbal writing onto vessels. But these types are not mutually exclusive categories: an initial meaning acquired, perhaps as a trademark, might be changed through personal re-interpretation in the later history of the vessel.

Post-firing graffiti rarely show how potters and painters integrated decoration and writing, and as such seem to disrupt the intended relationship between pot maker and viewer (Steiner 2007: 68). This relationship has been overwhelmingly discussed within the physical setting and sensual experience of the symposium. In the hands of symposiasts, painted inscriptions blended with the ornamental and figural decoration of drinking shapes to reinforce visual, verbal and musical messages about the symposium and Athenian (aristocratic) culture at large (Lissarrague 1990; Steiner 2007: 262–3). The lekythos from Pherai provides a different context for understanding this relationship.

MATERIALITY AS BODILY INTERACTION

The uncertainty concerning the reading of the graffito from Pherai does not mean that we have to completely abandon our interpretation of the object. The rationale for, and significance of, graffiti on pottery may have been intentionally obscure and unrelated to the trading or ownership of the vessel (Johnston 1975: 146). The ambiguity of the meaning of this type of writing in antiquity has, to a considerable extent, been further complicated by modern attempts at interpretation which focus on the text-like properties of graffiti without due consideration for their ancient reception as integral attributes of the ceramic container.

Within scholarship on social anthropology and archaeology in recent years there has been an attempt to emphasise the salience of the material nature of objects and of people interacting with them. Theories and definitions of materiality are varied and have included discussions about the philosophical stance of humanity towards the material world, the consumption

of mass products in modern Western societies and the cognitive and bodily engagement with material artefacts, usually during their manufacture (Appadurai 2005: 61; Miller 2005: 2–4; Sofaer 2006: 80–5; Ingold 2007: 2; Malafouris 2008: 34). The emphasis on materiality has, to a certain extent, emerged as a reaction against a prevalent linguistic approach to material culture with its focus on structuralism, symbolism and systems of representation (Boivin 2004: 69; 2008: 10–23). Instead, materiality draws attention to how people engage with material objects, the visual and sensual dimensions of which cannot be addressed sufficiently through a model of analysis inspired solely by language (Meskell 2004: 249; Boivin 2008: 26–7, 226). Since the movements and the senses of the human body play an important role in how artefacts are used and experienced, material objects become correlates of the human body, its motions and emotions (Warnier 2001: 6–7, 10; Hamilakis 2002; Warnier 2006: 187; 2007: 1–3, 8–11). Such arguments have wider implications about the inseparability of body, mind and matter (also termed distributed cognition), and the locus of agency within material objects (see Boivin 2004: 64; Knappett 2006: 240, 249). Drawing from Boivin and Warnier, my working definition of materiality is the physicality, or physical characteristics, of material objects as appreciated through bodily movement and sensing. My aim is to supplement a textual approach to interpreting the graffiti from Pherai by considering its non-textual properties.

When I inspected the lekythos in the Archaeological Museum of Volos in March 2008, the graffiti became apparent as I turned the vessel upside down. A similar movement, but for the purposes of pouring oil, for example, on a dining occasion in antiquity, would produce the same effect: the graffiti asserted its presence during instances of upturning the lekythos. Thus, the physicality of the graffiti, that of the lekythos and that of the human body could be merged into one indistinguishable physicality as the user came into close contact with the vessel. It was precisely through the engagement of the human body that the marked lekythos was socialised as a meaningful object in specific contexts of use, such as during a funeral, but also in the wider context of Thessalian material culture.

In defining the socialisation of the lekythos as its corporeal and contextual use, the materiality of a short text can be explored within a temporal, geographical and cultural setting (Meskell 2004). At a micro-level of analysis, moments of handling and moving the lekythos can be seen as moments of its socialisation. At a macro-level this socialisation pertained to a wider experience involving various people and material objects rather than a one-to-one relationship between one person (the vase user) and one object (the lekythos). A discussion of socialisation then complements an understanding of materiality.

While Haimonian lekythoi, like this one, have been primarily excavated from burial contexts, they have also been recovered from sanctuaries such as Olympia, sacred caves (including the Corycian Cave near Delphi), and

from clearance deposits of private houses in the Athenian Agora (Jacquemin 1984: 103–21; Shear 1993: 389, 393; Burow 2000: 209, 249–59). The versatile use of these vessels across the domestic, dedicatory and sepulchral domains implies various instances of handling during the social occasions of feasting, pilgrimage and internment. Haimonian lekythoi may have also been family heirlooms offered at the funeral with pottery of a later date (for examples at Eleusis: see Mylonas 1975: 60–1, 173–4, 335, 352, pl. 213α–β, 273α, 329γ, 339α). These lekythoi then may have been owned at household level rather than being strictly personal possessions. As a consequence, their relationship to the human body does not necessarily imply one individual. But equally there is no reason to assume that only the graffito writer engaged closely with the lekythos or its mark; the vessel may have had a long utilisation cycle including a change of hands as an item of gift giving.

Concerning the identity of the ancient user(s), the burial record for Haimonian lekythoi shows no specific pattern with regard to age, gender or status groups. In Thessaly, as in other locations, graves containing lekythoi of this type are diverse and include pits, richly-furnished sarcophagi and burials in earth mounds (Chourmouziades 1970; Batziou-Efstathiou 1985: 190, no. 72; 1987: 247, no. 92). Assuming that the burial evidence is suggestive of a broad basis of use in real life, Haimonian lekythoi must have been handled by people with a range of physiques: young and old, male and female, tall and short, able and less able, people with good and others with failing eyesight. Given the variety of potential users we can expect that these individuals engaged differently with the material attributes of ceramic containers. What can be said is that small lekythoi, like this one, related to the human body through their usage, shape and decoration style thus entailing a corporeal encounter with their graffiti and with writing in general.

FUNCTIONALITY AND THE SURFACES OF SMALL LEKYTHOI

Although Haimonian and related lekythoi may have been used in food preparation or as tableware (Attic lekythoi have recently been excavated from kitchen areas at Azoria in Crete; see Haggis et al. 2007: 249–51), their functionality pertained primarily to caring for the body. In using the lekythos to anoint oneself (or somebody else) with oil or perfume, a person in ancient times connected the vessel intimately with the body and its sensuality through the touching of the flesh. We see this sensuality represented iconographically on pottery: the potter and painter Nearchos (known from his incised signature) emphasises the sensual experience of applying oil on the body through the decoration and painted inscriptions, both with sexual innuendos, on a small round aryballos in sixth-century Athens (Osborne 2007: 185–8).

The strap handle would have served to hang the lekythos on the wall, as shown, for example, on depictions of domestic interiors on early

fifth-century white lekythoi (Oakley 2004: 46–7). When holding a small lekythos, it is reasonable to assume that the user wrapped their palm around its cylindrical body.¹⁴ The shape of the slender vessel made it fit nicely into the hand and adjust to the arm and wrist movements without the strap handle being in the way. The user's body constituted an all-embracing context by drawing the small object into one's personal space and differentiating it from other objects beyond one's reach (Bailey 2005: 38–9). It was precisely on such occasions that the presence of graffiti could be both seen and felt.

Inside the rim the lekythos from Pherai has a sharp ridge to curtail dripping but other Haimonian lekythoi, which I have examined in Volos and elsewhere, feature no ridge at all. Different handling movements were necessary when pouring oil from lekythoi with or without a ridge. Owing to its uneven underside, the lekythos wobbles when standing on its foot but stands firmly when resting on its mouth. On the surface of the mouth top there are deep grooves that, in my view, could be abrasions of wear and tear from repeatedly storing the empty lekythos upside down. If so, the under-foot graffiti would have been on permanent view. By comparison, a long ownership graffiti, 'I belong to Aphrodite', runs clockwise on the underside of a small mid fifth-century red-figured lekythos (Christie's 1996: 56–7, no. 69). Similarly, the name 'Alexas', runs upside down in retrograde on the lower outer wall of a small early fifth-century black-glazed cup deposited upright in a child's grave in the western Peloponnese (Arapogianni 1999: 178–9). When the cup was stored upturned in daily life, perhaps stacked on top of other cups, the graffiti was clearly visible and readable. This highlights how the small-scale movement of pottery (carrying, upturning and stacking) could reveal the presence of graffiti. This applies especially to Haimonian lekythoi; owing to their small size, slender shape and versatile use across different domains, these vessels were easily moveable and the writing easily revealed.

Some late black-figured lekythoi were carefully painted with minute details (including tiny imitation inscriptions) reflecting the painter's sharpness of vision and inviting a close observation on the part of the vase user (see, for example, Volos BE36645). Users would have needed to bring these lekythoi particularly close to their eyes in order to see the imitation inscription, let alone attempt to read it. In some instances these inscriptions may have helped to convey the thrust of action in the scene (Immerwahr 1990: 24). Thus, it was the viewing rather than the reading that mattered for the user. Could this also hold true for graffiti on pots?

A post-firing ownership graffiti on a small Attic lekythos from Selinous, which dates to c. 500, reads: 'I belong to Nyno, daughter of Ainesos' (Manganaro 1998: 268; Dubois 2008: 193, no. 117). The graffiti runs orthograde along the top of the lekythos cylinder, just below the shoulder, but is confined to the undecorated part of the lekythos and finishes approximately where the figural scene begins. The incised script and painted imagery have been kept visually distinct on this lekythos and, by contrast to painted

inscriptions, are not interdependent. It is difficult to tell whether the vase user's eye was primarily drawn to the black-figured scene, a common depiction of Athena standing between two warriors, rather than to the incised ownership message. In any case, the graffito is clearly visible and its placement outside the pictorial field may have intended to increase its visibility.

On another Attic lekythos, which has stylistic affinities with the Haimonian workshop and probably comes from Cyprus, the long post-firing graffito starts on the undecorated upper body of the lekythos but continues over the frieze above the figural scene (Volioti and Papageorgiou 2008). The graffito reads: 'Hermaios found me, treasure ++++' and can be interpreted variously. The incised letters circumvent the female's head to the left of the scene. They do not avoid, nevertheless, the black glaze of the figural decoration because it was a harder surface to write on. Some letters have been incised over the black glazed dots of the frieze but not on the scene itself, which sketchily shows Dionysos reclining between two seated women.

The long graffiti on the two lekythoi from Selinous and Cyprus follow broader tendencies of Archaic writing on pottery, whereby both painted and incised writing was created with thoughtfulness as to its visual impact (Burrows and Ure 1909: 340; Osborne and Pappas 2007). The graffiti were not incised, for example, vertically down the small lekythoi but in the direction, left to right, that the figural scene unfolded. The cylindrical shape and small size of these lekythoi meant that their graffiti did not invite a different kind of bodily engagement than the painted decoration. In rotating the lekythos clockwise the visual appreciation of both text and image required the same coordination of arm, head and gaze movement.

The two elaborate messages about Nyno and Hermaios were no doubt intended to be seen by more people than just their writers and may be used as evidence for the handling of these lekythoi as incised vessels by various individuals. The avoidance of writing graffiti on top of the figural scene implies that even the repetitive themes and unrefined decoration on small late black-figured lekythoi mattered in their own right. In spite of their abundance and ubiquity, these vessels did not serve as ad hoc media for writing, like scrap pottery fragments. If anything, such long graffiti suggest how specific pots were important to the individuals who used them. Graffiti on small lekythoi were not miniaturised but always fairly visible (see, for example, a further ownership graffito, 'I belong to Kallinika', scratched in large letters on the upper body of a black-glazed lekythos excavated in western mainland Greece: Dekoulakou 1973: 391).¹⁵ Irrespective of their meaning, however, these graffiti made a visual statement and, by comparison to the painted imitation inscriptions, were not just intended to be readable text. Besides, people may have been familiar with what the graffito 'said' and did not need to 'read' it every time they handled the lekythos. What they encountered during instances of handling was the *presence* of such graffiti.

When one holds the lekythos from Pherai, the hastiness that went into its production (potting, decoration and firing) is not only visually transparent

but also affects how the surfaces of the lekythos can be felt by one's hand. The surface is, in places, uneven and pitted owing to lime inclusions and air pockets in the clay. The layer of black glaze has not been applied uniformly, with consequences for the visual and tactile sensing of the decorated surface. Some incisions, moreover, are wider than others, indicating perhaps that they were amplified by an engraving tool after the vessel had been fired.¹⁶ Although it is unclear whether the re-engraving of decorative incisions was carried out by the craftsman at the pottery workshop or by the vase user, both individuals may have wished to enhance the visual clarity of the figural scene. The underlying reasons for re-incising the decoration, however, were different from writing graffiti. The ubiquity of these lekythoi and their appreciation as palm vessels may have encouraged their scratching with a readily available pointed object, such as a dress pin. If that was the case, then the physicality of graffiti can also be placed within a wider spectrum of incision activity without compromising the distinctive character of graffiti.

For the lekythos from Pherai, there is a contrast between the angularity of the graffiti and the wavy incisions on the decoration (compare Figures 7.1 and 7.2). Visually, the longer decoration incisions reinforce a sense of movement for the standing figures and also give shape to the carelessly drawn scene. For example, the image in black glaze depicts the figure to the right like a shadow but the incised lines help contain it in a more defined shape (Figure 7.2). These incisions clearly belong to the figures, and are part of the painted composition, whereas the graffiti under the base is an additional mark. The underfoot, which is partly smooth owing to a thin layer of slip, has a mechanical groove around the edge (the result of throwing the pot on the wheel), a number of firing imperfections (pits and cracks) and a deep conical indentation at its centre (Figure 7.1). The graffiti then is just one of the textural elements on the underside.

The circular shape of the base could have affected how the graffiti was sensed. If the lekythos was held in such a way that its base was supported in the palm of one hand, then it is less likely that one would have felt the graffiti, given its shallow incisions. With the base lying flat on the palm one might have sensed some unevenness of surface but possibly not any more detail. This leads to the consideration of running the finger, or fingers, in a circular motion around the base of the lekythos whilst holding it with the other hand from its upper body. What could be significant here is that the angularity of the graffiti, running counter to the circular shape of the base, would make the inscription stand out during this tactile inspection, which may have been a habitual inquisitive act given the common occurrence of graffiti on the underfoot of vessels.

The texture of the graffiti, as an indented surface on the base of the lekythos, could have functioned as an indirect link to the putative content of the graffiti. By touching this indented surface of the graffiti a person in antiquity could sense its presence without necessarily trying to read, or

decipher, what the graffito meant. Haptic sensing may have been meaningfully linked to the presence of the graffito irrespective of whether it was understood as a trademark, a name or a non-verbal inscription. When the lekythos was held, the graffito could be felt just like other parts of the vase surface. The physicality of the graffito was not distinct from that of the lekythos as a whole. The graffito therefore combined with other surface physical traces (from making and repeatedly using the vessel) to convey an object narrative of materiality (Hurcombe 2007: 536).

The Emotive Properties of Graffiti

The visual and textural appreciation of such lekythoi and their graffiti also raise questions about the emotions elicited during instances of handling. This is relevant because, from a biological perspective, feelings and sentiments are intertwined with the human senses, and the interaction between people and material objects is both sensual and emotional (Boivin 2008: 106). Irrespective of their pre-depositional lifecycles, the majority of these lekythoi were used at the funeral, an occasion charged with emotions as friends and relatives gathered to apply (perfumed) oil to the dead body and consequently place the lekythoi inside or outside the grave. The customary funerary use may have increased the emotive and personal associations between lekythoi and their other uses in real life.

Graffiti could function to further personalise such lekythoi, which, after all, were produced to carry a small portion of liquids, presumably for one individual. In being integral to the life history of the pot, the graffito may have related to a person's emotional attachments to one lekythos or to the deceased. The presence of the graffito could be imprinted in the memory of the person who handled the lekythos thus triggering various sentiments by calling to mind events, people (other than the lekythos owner) and material objects (beyond pottery).

The small size of the lekythos, moreover, may have had an emotional impact *per se*. The physical sense of control when holding a small object could be psychologically reassuring (Bailey 2005: 33). Although this physical proximity and exclusivity between one object and one individual may have been temporary, its emotional effects may have been more permanent and long term (Knappett 2005: 29). Beyond its capacity to trigger emotional associations, the graffito was caught up in the sentiments arising from holding closely a small lekythos.

The figural decoration on the lekythos from Pherai depicts an iconographic theme, Dionysos and his followers, which was common for ancient viewers of such vessels. With few exceptions, the Haimonian iconographic repertoire capitalised on the familiar and the conventional by reiterating well-known subjects. The popularity, longevity and wide distribution of Haimonian pottery also meant that its less-refined drawing style was familiar to a large number of people in ancient times. This thematic and

stylistic familiarity may have achieved an emotional reassurance for users and individual owners of such pottery. A parallel could be drawn with mass-produced kitsch objects of modern times, which, by virtue of their lack of distinctiveness, effectuate a sentimental affirmation for their owners (Binkley 2000: 132–5). The possible emotional aspects of the graffiti were compounded with those of the lekythos because of its style and theme. The graffiti did not act in a vacuum but combined with the non-textual dimensions of the material object. In a general sense, this is also true of graffiti on walls, buildings, the rock-face, in public spaces and in houses.

All of the above considerations have dealt with how the graffiti was inextricably linked to the physical and emotive properties of the vessel, as these were experienced through the human body. The immediate context of the graffiti was the lekythos as an object that was actively used in Pheraian life and death and it is therefore necessary to examine this context in more detail.

The Thessalian Context of the Inscribed Lekythos

Pherai flourished in the early fourth century under its powerful tyrant Jason but had already developed a sense of civic identity in the first half of the fifth century when it started minting its own silver coinage (Decourt et al. 2004: 705). Attic pottery was a popular offering in Pheraian graves into the Hellenistic period and the southern and northern cemeteries of the city are noted in modern scholarship as find locations of two inscribed gold tablets with Orphic texts, both dated to the later fourth century (Intzesiloglou 1982: 221; Chrysostomou 1998: 211; Parker and Stamatopoulou 2004: 1–3, 29; Graf and Iles Johnston 2007: 38–9). Although it is tempting to associate the lekythos with a habitual practice (Thessalian or otherwise) of placing inscribed objects in the grave, it is difficult to draw a connection between functional ceramic oil jars with short graffiti and gold tablets, which were purpose-made to carry relatively long messages. There is also no reason to associate the Dionysian themes on Haimonian lekythoi with the underworld since the profusion of Dionysos in the Attic black-figured iconographic tradition, of which these lekythoi were an integral part, argues against a primarily chthonic interpretation (Isler-Kerényi 2007: 213–15; Volioti 2007: 97).

The short graffiti from Pherai pertained, most likely, to the pre-funerary use of the vessel. It has been suggested that graffiti incised haphazardly on the outside of black-glazed cups excavated in Phthiotis, to the south of Thessaly, compromised their appearance and de-functionalised them as objects of everyday use (Hatzidakis 1984: 22), but we should not necessarily see writing as defacement (Burrows and Ure 1909: 340; see also the introduction to this volume).¹⁷ An early fifth-century black-figured kylix of a common type featured two dedication graffiti (one on the inside running around the tondo and the other on the flat base of the resting foot)

both of which were purposely erased prior to placing the vessel in a grave at Marathon (Valavanis 2001: 43–4). The presence of graffiti was probably considered by the owner of the kylix inappropriate for re-using this vessel as an offering to the dead not because of the aesthetically disfiguring effect of graffiti but due to its textual content, which included a reference to the gods. Amongst possible interpretations, the graffito on the lekythos from Cyprus mentioned above ('Hermaios found me, treasure ++++') may convey a message for the deceased parodying what he or she would find in the afterlife.¹⁸ On the whole, however, there is little conclusive evidence that graffiti were customarily applied at the burial site.

The cemeteries of Pherai in early Classical times were located outside the city along roads leading to other major Thessalian settlements: to Pharsalos in the west, to Pagasai in the east, to Larisa in the north and to Phthiotic Thebes in the south (Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1994: 79; Morgan 2003: 94–5). The portability of small closed shapes may have rendered such lekythoi items of first choice for reasons other than their widespread funerary use. If so, the topography of burial findspots may also indirectly highlight the shape and size advantages of these vessels.

Small late black-figured lekythoi, which are, on present evidence, numerically predominant amongst Attic shapes in Thessaly, have been found in coastal and inland Thessalian locations, indicating that these ceramic containers were easily moved around by both sea and overland communication routes (Volioti 2009: 158, 161). Findspots not far from Pherai, such as Soros and Nea Ionia Volou, and in places further away (but still well connected with Pherai), such as Larisa, suggest that lekythoi of this type circulated in considerable numbers across this region and were not rare imported goods (Tziafalias 1984: 150; Batziou-Efstathiou 2004: 91, 101).¹⁹ Irrespective of whether our graffito was incised in Thessaly or elsewhere, its presence differentiated one particular vessel amongst many locally available lekythoi. At the same time, the graffito, unique as it may have been, was just one aspect of Thessalian cultural taste for Attic wares which have also been found in the early excavations of the Temple of Zeus and Ennodia and in domestic contexts at Pherai (Arvanitopoulos 1926: 108; Intzesiloglou 1980: 269–70).

By contrast to the Aleuads of Larisa, the Skopads of Krannon and the Echekratids of Pharsalos, the Archaic aristocratic families of Pherai are not mentioned in the ancient sources. Local elites, nevertheless, may have organised large-scale building and sculptural projects in late Archaic and early Classical Pherai, such as the first temple of Zeus Thaulios and Ennodia, the first city fortifications and the erection of stone statues, as for example that of Athena in the Severe style found on the city acropolis. A circular building, excavated in the centre of the city, and elaborate sanctuary dedications, may also signify the heightened importance of public life (Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1994: 78; Morgan 2003: 92, 135; Stamatopoulou 2007: 324). The commonality and large numbers of Haimonian lekythoi,

however, strongly indicate that these vessels related to individuals' private lives. Importing, buying, using and giving such lekythoi as (burial) gifts did not require a central organisation but entailed preferences by individuals beyond local elite groups. It was precisely because of their personal and private character that such lekythoi could have been marked locally or appreciated as already written-upon objects.

Early Classical Thessalian society was considered to be affluent (Plato *Meno* 70a–b). Consequently, objects of high art, including bespoke Attic pottery, have been considered material manifestations of wealth primarily in the hands of elites (Stamatopoulou 2007: 313–15, 327, 336). Despite the overall lack in detail and refinement, the iconography of Haimonian lekythoi portrayed a good life through imagery such as feasting and chariot racing (Schmidt 2005: 40). Besides iconography, the qualities of such lekythoi (hard-fired, durable, small, graspable, portable) and the vogue of Attic pottery in the early fifth century can explain their local popularity. Since lekythoi were personal (or family) possessions and display items, iconographically alluding to a wealthy lifestyle and comprising valuable objects through their material attributes, their graffiti were arguably integral to the social importance of these vessels.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has investigated an abbreviated and non-diagnostic post-firing ceramic graffiti, comprising the letters *iota* and *nu*, which could be a commercial, ownership or non-verbal mark (or a combination of these categories). Despite the difficulties in reading the content of the graffiti, operating within the realm of conjecture is not necessarily problematic: archaeologists ought to embrace uncertainty in interpretation and deal with data that do not always lead to closure (Gero 2007: 313).

The context of this graffiti can be understood as the relationship between a small closed-shaped vessel and its user(s). This relationship did not depend exclusively on reading the graffiti but on sensing its presence during moments of handling the lekythos. The graffiti and other surface marks, from the production and use of this lekythos, could be appreciated through the movements of the user's body. Although placed on the underfoot, this graffiti was not hidden from view because the lekythos was tipped when full with (perfumed) oil and, most likely, transported and stored upside down as an empty vessel. Even if the graffiti-writer and the lekythos user(s) were different individuals, they could relate physically to the graffiti in similar ways. In both cases the ramifications of haptic sensing are comparable: a person would grasp the vessel bottom-up to incise it and another person would encounter the graffiti when upturning the lekythos to pour oil. Thus, the materiality of graffiti (for example, the form of its grooves), blended with the materiality of the pot and that of its users'

bodies. The salience of writing on an object converged with the importance of the object when it was socialised in the hands of its users.

The socialisation of the marked lekythos within Pherai allowed its integration alongside other objects of Thessalian material culture, including imported Attic pottery. The personal engagement with the graffito was not dependent upon the elite governance of Pherai in early Classical times. The visual and the tactile sensing of the lekythos, to the extent that these could become corporeal experiences on (private, or semi-private) social occasions, provided a meaningful context for this graffito beyond textual interpretation(s) relating to writing and reading.

The approach pursued here is different from other studies of pottery graffiti, which have sought to interpret the context of graffiti by examining primarily its production: the time-bound practice of incising letter shapes as this pertains to the moment of writing but not the subsequent use of the pot. Ceramic containers with graffiti, moreover, could have long life-histories as objects that were singled out and socialised differently from other vessels. By drawing from theories of materiality I have attempted to go beyond the traditional approaches of Classical archaeology, where epigraphy, connoisseurship and historical information tend to provide the prevalent contextual frameworks. The epistemological exchanges resulting from considering materiality can be profitable because they allow us to appreciate, in a new light, a common Attic pot of lesser artistic significance, with its inherently ambiguous graffiti. My aim has been to supplement a textual understanding of ceramic graffiti with an examination of their visual, sensual and emotional dimensions within temporal and spatial contexts of use.

The presence of post-firing graffiti makes the active handling of ceramic containers archaeologically visible. This is especially relevant for small and easily portable shapes, of which late black-figured lekythoi are a prime example. Contrary to wall graffiti, which were fixed in place, pottery graffiti were not only seen but also felt during instances of use, and these unavoidably entailed bodily movement and, more importantly, the movement of the pottery itself. Graffiti, primarily of a commercial nature, have been crucial in discussions about the large-scale movement of Attic figured pottery to distant markets. Pottery featuring graffiti, however, also ought to be associated with human mobility at the level of individual users who, after all, engaged with such objects in daily life and transported them across different contexts of use: domestic, dedicatory and burial.

NOTES

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Margaret Kenna, Carl Knappett, Kathleen Lynch, Robin Osborne, Joyce Reynolds, Victoria Sabetai and Maria Stamatopoulou for useful discussion, and to my supervisors Amy Smith and Emma Aston, to the two editors Jennifer Baird and Claire Taylor, to Alan Johnston, to an anonymous referee and to Georg Gerleigner for comments on earlier drafts. All shortcomings are mine.

1. The closest parallel to the scene I could find appears on a cup attributed by Beazley to the Manner of the Haimon Painter. Photograph in the Beazley Archive; vase number 331681 in the online database (www.beazley.ox.ac.uk, accessed 29 October 2009).
2. Volos k3335–177, unpublished. The Haimon Painter is not a historical figure but an invention of modern scholarship to refer to a large number of vases, mostly lekythoi and cups, produced by different potters and painters across workshops in Athens and rural Attica (Cheliotis 1978: 153–4; Jubier-Galinier et al. 2003: 39). Given the difficulty in distinguishing between different artisans' hands, in this chapter I shall use the collective term 'Haimonian' for such lekythoi and their workshops.
3. There has been no research on local imitations of late black-figured lekythoi in Thessaly. Although the case cannot be proven without analysing the clay of the pot and of the glaze on the pot surface, two such lekythoi (Volos K3421.V.b and BE11585) I studied in the Archaeological Museum of Volos do not look Attic. Attic sixth-century lekythoi of the Deianeira shape were imitated in Boeotia (Ure 1927: 56–7).
4. Alan Johnston (*pers. comm.*) confirms this is the most likely reading. I take his expertise and do not consider the inverted *nu* to be a sigma. Sideways *sigma*, however, does exist: see the kylix fragment recovered from a late Archaic deposit at Thorikos in Attika, which bears an abbreviated personal name, 'Aris' (Vanhove 2006: 16–17, 165). Thessalian stone inscriptions dating to c. 550–450 show the use of both three-stroke *sigma* and of non-angular *sigma*, even within the same inscription (Jeffery 1990: 96–9, 402, pl. 11 no. 4).
5. Many thanks to Charalambos Intzesiloglou for advising on the incision across the *iota*.
6. A graffito of *nu* and *iota*, type 15Bi, appears on a small Attic black-figured lekythos from Palermo dating to 500–490. A stylistically similar lekythos from Palermo bears a graffito, type 15Biii, that could either be read as *nu* *iota* or *iota* *nu* (Johnston 2006: 84 nos. 8 and 19).
7. The prevalence of commercial graffiti on small late black-figured lekythoi from Sicily seems to reflect the large numbers of lekythoi excavated and published there. Compared to Italian locations, trademarked pottery is scarce in mainland Greece (Johnston 1979: 16, 18; 2006: 5, 11–12) but the lack of a comprehensive study of Attic pottery from Thessaly may bias our present understanding (Volioti 2009: 157–8). It is worth mentioning that a late black-figured lekythos from Corinth features an inverted *nu* as part of a two-letter underfoot graffito (ON) that has been thought to convey a mercantile message: 'for sale' (Blair Brownlee 1995: 360).
8. The Beazley Archive online database lists 1439 Haimonian lekythoi (www.beazley.ox.ac.uk, accessed 29 October 2009). Many more such lekythoi, however, remain unpublished in museum storage.
9. The graffito on a black-glazed lekythos (P6201) was not incised when it was a whole pot (Shear 1993: 393, 440).
10. No information is published as to the size and findspot of this fragment. I am sceptical about Oikonomides' (1986b: 53) re-interpretation of this graffito as a contents label referring to Tyrrhenian wine. Although there has been no

residue analysis of early fifth-century lekythoi, their small capacity argues against their use as wine-transporting vessels.

11. This is the only Haimonian lekythos (no. 8047) bearing graffiti in Immerwahr's preliminary *Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions* (<http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/attic/index.html>, accessed 29 October 2009).
12. I would attribute this lekythos to the Diosphos Painter, whose workshop had close stylistic ties with the Haimonian one (Jubier-Galinier 2003). Lekythos painters, such as the Diosphos Painter, favoured 'nonsense writing' because inscriptions added to the prestige of the figural decoration (Immerwahr 2006: 150–5).
13. For an example of a trademark on the shoulder of a small late black-figured lekythos, see Johnston 2006: 177 no. 25b.
14. I am indebted to Kathleen Lynch for prompting me to consider small lekythoi as palm vessels.
15. Various small pottery shapes from the Pnyx in Athens, dating to the late fifth and early fourth centuries, bear graffiti in large letters (Davidson et al. 1943: 30).
16. This can be clearly seen on another Haimonian lekythos from the west Thesalian plain (Volos K3421.V.b, unpublished) where the incisions emphasising the outline of the horse have, I believe, been widened at a post-firing stage.
17. Bronze statuettes destined for dedication also had long texts cut on them (Johnston 1993: 42).
18. I am grateful to Robin Osborne for this suggestion. The word for treasure (*keimēlion*), unique amongst vase inscriptions, has underworld connotations in literary texts.
19. Volos BE5684, BE9734, BE11585, BE11586, BE11591. I would attribute these unpublished lekythoi from Nea Ionia Volou to the Haimonian workshop.

8 Egyptian 'Inscriptions' and Greek 'Graffiti' at El Kanais in the Egyptian Eastern Desert

Rachel Mairs

THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF GRAFFITI AT EL KANAIS

The site of El Kanais lies around 55 km east of Edfu in the Wadi Mia, along one of the major routes through the eastern desert between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. Like many sites in the eastern and western deserts of Egypt, the rockface at El Kanais, which lies near a small pharaonic temple, proved attractive to graffiti writers over a long period of time. The graffiti with which the present study will principally be concerned consist of a corpus of 92 (published) Greek texts, covering a period of probably 400 to 500 years in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, but the earliest epigraphic activity recorded here is a set of Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions connected with the foundation of the temple (see Darnell et al. 2002 for sites along the Theban desert road in the Qena Bend, where the same locations may have written and pictorial graffiti from the predynastic period until Late Antiquity). Subsequent graffiti at El Kanais include some Arabic writings (mentioned but unfortunately not recorded by Bernard 1972: xviii) and a number of graffiti by nineteenth- and twentieth-century travellers. Among these are a French graffiti on the temple by a Cretan named Leonidas Lychounes, recording visits in 1843 and 1846 (Bernard 1972: pl. 6.2), and another which appears to read 'C. ODEH 1914' (Schott 1961: pl. 6; I have not been able to find any further information on either of these individuals, although Odeh is an Arabic name). We therefore have a record of graffiti and inscriptions at El Kanais stretching over more than 3,000 years: an excellent opportunity to look at change and continuity in the relationship of travellers to this site, as well as inter-textuality between their writings.

As this chapter will outline, there are some very important differences between these texts. The inscription of Seti I is highly formal and stylised, following the strict conventions of classical Egyptian written and visual culture. The graffiti of later Greek and Roman visitors are in themselves very diverse. They are written on the rockface and on the temple building. Some are simply scratched, a few are more carefully incised and painted in. They vary in length and in literary quality. Nevertheless, we may observe

many of the same motivations underlying the creation of all of these pieces of writing. Records of repeat visits, in particular, underline the transactional nature of religious dedications for safety in the desert.¹

The temple at El Kanais was founded by the nineteenth-dynasty pharaoh Seti I (fl. c. 1294–1279 BCE). Like subsequent travellers, Seti had a very specific reason for being in the desert, and we are fortunate that he recounts his actions at El Kanais, his motivations and his experiences of desert travel in a long hieroglyphic inscription on the temple walls (quoted in full on page 158 below). One aim of this chapter is to discuss the distinction between ‘graffiti’ and ‘inscriptions’ but I will also suggest that there is much to be gained from blurring this division in the writings from El Kanais; Seti’s text, for example, is an inscription in the traditional sense. It is a formal piece of writing, in classical Middle Egyptian (which by this period was primarily a literary register, rather than a colloquial language), carved in hieroglyphs on the walls of his temple. On Egyptian monuments, texts such as this are integrated into a formal visual language of public display, in which painted or carved pictorial elements and the form of the monument itself all play a role (Baines 2007: 1–30). On a tour of inspection of his gold-mining operations in the eastern desert, Seti states that he selected a place to dig a well and build a small settlement with a shrine, dedicated most notably to the triad of Amen-Re, Re-Horakhty and Ptah, but also to Horus, Isis and Menmaatre, as well as the cult of the deified king himself. Appropriately, the Amen-Re of El Kanais has iconographic elements of Min, a fertility god with associations with the eastern desert.

Seti’s inscription states that, thanks to the well, a road which had been arduous ‘since the time of the gods’ was now less difficult for travellers. The temple building itself is relatively small, consisting of a chamber carved into the rock, fronted by a columned portico (Schott 1961; concisely, Brand 2000: 279–82). After his first visit, Seti returned to the site a second time to dedicate the temple. Two contemporary stelae found nearby give us some insight into ongoing operations at El Kanais: they record two men associated with the gold-mining operations (a troop commander, who oversaw transport of the gold, and another charged with excavating a well), as well as a stable master and chief-of-troops worshipping the gods associated with the shrine, and also the gods Hathor and Horus of Behdet, both connected with the desert and foreign lands (Brand 2000: 281–2).

Although none of the later graffiti from the site mention mining activities, the role of El Kanais—and the kinds of people who passed through it—in the Hellenistic and Roman periods appear not to have been dissimilar (see Adams 2007 on the Classical historical sources on the eastern desert). It was garrisoned, on an occasional if not permanent basis, as can be seen from the graffiti of corps of soldiers, and the (unexcavated) fort (Bernard 1972: 46–54). Even if no Ptolemaic or Roman ruler appears to have had the same personal concern with the site as Seti, it was at least looked after somewhere in the chain of command. An *‘archisomatophylax*

and *strategos*' (chief bodyguard and general) passed by and left a graffito (Bernand 1972: no. 46); one graffiti writer dedicates to the deified Arsinoe II Philadelphos (no. 9); and another records that he was sent by the king to clean the well-shafts at the Paneion (no. 12; perhaps to oversee works rather than physically undertake them himself). El Kanais was evidently still a useful way-station, which was important to guard and maintain.

But much of the site's continued relevance, in the Hellenistic period at least, may have come from new activities in the eastern desert: the newly-developed Red Sea trade with India (Bernand 1972: nos. 8 and 42 mention adventures at sea; Bernand 1977: no. 64 explicitly refers to India), and elephant-hunting expeditions for the Ptolemaic army (Bernand 1972: no. 9 bis, pl. 54, with a rather charming petroglyph of an elephant; Casson 1993; Burstein 1996). Despite a reduction in graffiti, and possible decline in the importance of this particular route, in the Roman period Roman-named military personnel or traders, including cavaliers and a ship's captain, continued to pass by and dedicate to Pan (Bernand 1972: nos. 55–7; see also, in general, Sidebotham 1986: 81–2; Maxfield 2003).

The El Kanais graffiti from the Hellenistic period reflect a particular social order, and there are significant patterns in choices of self-ascription (Mairs forthcoming). Many individuals record only their name or name and patronymic (some 33 per cent of the 72 Hellenistic period graffiti). Perhaps this was all they wanted to write (marking their presence), or perhaps this was all they were able to (on semi-literacy, and the possible prayer associations of an apparently 'simple' signature, see further page 162 below). Significant proportions, however, record also their (regional Greek) ethnic origin (36 per cent) or their occupation (31 per cent), with or without patronymic, but never both ethnic and occupation together. When the Roman period graffiti are also taken into account the percentages remain similar. Those who record their occupation do so only when it has some specific bearing on their presence in the desert, and this occupation usually also carries some official mandate; these are principally soldiers, those involved in elephant-hunts, or officials in state service. All sorts of other trades and professions would have been necessary at sites in the desert, but the only attestation of these is a single graffito by a 'builder', who, however, also mentions that he took part in the elephant-hunts (Bernand 1972: no. 9 bis).

Almost all the dedicators have Greek names and, where recorded, Greek regional ethnics, with a very small minority of Latin-named individuals, and two or three Jews. Any more complex identities are probably obscured by the simple fact that Greek is the written medium (so, for example, we would probably not know if any of these individuals also used Egyptian names), but it is curious that we have no record of *Egyptian* graffiti at El Kanais. Whether or not lower literacy rates in Demotic, and the decline of use of the script in general during the early Roman period, are factors, it can be surmised that modern recording practices have also been a factor in

this pattern. Bernand's project was to record Greek texts; he spent only four days at the site, and even in that time recorded 30 unpublished inscriptions, although he states that he is sure others have been missed (Bernand 1972: xvi–xviii). Bernand mentions Arabic graffiti, but gives no further information. Especially when the chronologically and culturally heterogeneous character of other desert rock art or graffiti sites is taken into account, the apparent 'empty millennium' between Seti I and the Ptolemies at El Kanais is suspicious. Demotic and Hieratic graffiti we should expect are or were there, but we happen to have no record of them.

What the following discussion will principally be concerned with, however, is not the question of *who* these graffiti writers were (a question I have explored elsewhere: Mairs forthcoming), but of *why* and *how* they came to find themselves in the desert, and record their presence there in writing. The inscription- and graffiti-makers of all periods at El Kanais frequently feel the need to tell their readers what they are doing in the desert in the first place, and many have a keen sense that they have such an audience. Travelling through, or being stationed in, the eastern desert was something exceptional. The placement of the inscriptions on the rock, and internal indications in the texts themselves, also enable us to look at the process of writing, and how visitors perceived the epigraphic act.

GRAFFITI OR INSCRIPTIONS?

As I have suggested above, there are many ways in which a pharaoh commissioning hieroglyphic inscriptions on the walls of his new temple, and a Greek scratching his name on the rockface nearby almost 1,200 years later—even a traveller of the nineteenth century CE recording his second visit to the site—are actually expressing similar concerns and have similar reasons for leaving their mark. They may be considered as part of the same broad epigraphic tradition. They show the significance of the site as a way-station, and the concerns of visitors of all periods both to 'make their mark', and thus record their passage through the desert. To do so indicates that they have overcome the dangers of desert travel, with or without divine help. Although those leaving Greek graffiti were almost certainly ignorant of the meaning of the Pharaonic inscription, all the writings at the site are, in similar ways, responses to the environment.

I will for the most part refer to the Greek incised writings on the temple and rockface as 'graffiti', although in Bernand's original publications they are termed 'inscriptions'. The semantic distinction between graffiti as words scratched or otherwise marked on a surface or object, and an inscription as words incised with greater technical skill and formality, has generally given way to a perception that graffiti are 'informal' and in some way not officially sanctioned. My own distinction between the inscriptions of Seti I (and one or two of the more elaborate Greek writings on the

temple) and the graffiti of Greek travellers on the rockface is largely one of convenience, following the convention that a text carved on official orders in a public setting is an 'inscription' and one personally written by a private individual in a setting constrained by fewer rules of public behaviour is a 'graffito'. Peden, for example, in his work on Egyptian graffiti from earlier periods, regards them as 'non-official epigraphs', 'casual and intimate inscriptions', and 'a form of written communication that is invariably free of social restraints' (Peden 2001: xix, xxii). This is not necessarily so. Consideration of the internal dynamics of the El Kanais graffiti as a genre in their own right, in fact, brings out the extent to which their writers were keenly aware of the other texts around them, and obeyed certain rules with regard to the formulae they used, and the ways in which their authors described themselves (see Mairs forthcoming). Many of them are 'informal' only in the sense of being written by non-professional epigraphers with a lesser degree of literate education: they express the same religious notions and official hierarchies, often using the same vocabulary, as their more elegantly written neighbours.

Although the term 'graffiti' might therefore seem to denigrate or misrepresent the purpose and contents of these texts, there are other ways in which comparison with modern graffiti may provide some insights into the motivations of their writers, and the interaction between separate graffiti on the rockface as a whole. Studies of western urban graffiti from the 1970s onwards have focussed on graffiti as a form of protest, a mode of communication and personal expression outside socially- or politically-constrained norms, or a way of marking 'turf'. While these facets of the personal epigraphic act could be explored at other ancient sites (for example, Pompeii, though see the discussion in the introduction to this volume), they provide less useful approaches to the material from El Kanais. Yet there are elements of the 'psychology of graffiti' which are not entirely alien. Graffiti writers may seek to gain kudos from leaving their tag in a particular spot, such as a rival's territory or a high bridge or building (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974). We might make a broad parallel (though perhaps too broad to be compelling) with the practice of leaving one's signature in the desert in general, but it is also easy to read the statement 'Zenon came up here too' as a boast at having climbed up to a place high on the rockface rather than choosing an easier spot nearer the desert floor (Bernand 1972: no. 71; see further below).

Graffiti can also enter into a dialogue, often competitive, with one another, a phenomenon much studied in modern 'latrinalia', where virtual conversations take place with a string of writers responding to or modifying earlier remarks or drawings (Longenecker 1977; Birney 1973; see also Benefiel, this volume). Such bathroom graffiti may be used as an anonymous means of showing off one's wit (often obscene, often very context-specific in-jokes). At El Kanais the motivation may be different, but the sense of implicit dialogue with other graffiti and relationship to place is not

dissimilar. Perhaps most critically, the impetus to make a graffito in the first place probably came from reading and observing the large number of other texts on the rockface.

The cumulative sense we gain from the Hellenistic and Roman period graffiti at El Kanais is one of repeated viewing and emulation, over a period of several hundred years. Writing dedicatory graffiti to Pan was a repetitive, self-reproducing practice, reinforced by constant performance. As well as the potential symbolic impact of thanking Pan for one's protection by making a very visible mark on the very landscape one needed to be protected from, making a graffito placed the writer in a long-standing tradition, where the efficacy of appealing to the divine could be proven by the numerous thanks-offerings which surrounded it.

'PAN-OF-THE-GOOD-HUNT WHO LISTENS TO PRAYER . . . '

The inscription of Seti I gives us a vivid description of travel through the eastern desert. In a lengthy narrative section, we are told how the king stopped along the way on his inspection tour of the gold mines, and took stock of the difficult terrain and travelling conditions:

He said: "How painful is a way that has no water! What are travelers to do to relieve the parching of their throats? What quenches their thirst, the homeland being far and the desert wide? Woe to the man who thirsts in the wilderness! Now I will plan for them. I will make for them the means to sustain them, so that they may bless my name in the future, in years to come; that generations yet to be may come to glory in me for my energy. For I am indeed considerate and compassionate toward travelers." Now after his majesty had spoken these words to his own heart, he went about on the desert seeking a place to make a watering station. And God was guiding him, so as to grant the request of one whom he loved. Stone workers were ordered to dig a well in the mountains, in order that it might uplift the weary and refresh the heart of him who burns in the summer heat.

(trans. Lichtheim 1976: 52–7)

Over a thousand years later, during the reign of Ptolemy X or Ptolemy XII, one Demetrios recorded on a pillar of Seti's temple how he was 'sent by the king to clean the well-shafts at the Paneion' (Bernand 1972: no. 12, early-mid first century BCE). Provision and maintenance of wells along the desert routes remained a matter of official concern. This was depicted purely as an act of royal benevolence, but maintaining the desert transportation infrastructure clearly made sound economic sense. The military presence in the desert is also evidence of royal concern to protect important trade routes and access to key resources. Also on a column of the Paneion,

an earlier Ptolemaic inscription of the mid-third century BCE records the presence of a garrison of soldiers under one Neoptolemos (Bernand 1972: no. 10).

On a more personal level, a large number of the Greek graffiti from the site record the trials and tribulations of desert travel, in the context of prayers or thanks-offerings to Pan, a practice common all along the routes through the eastern desert in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (material collected in Bernand 1972 and 1977, with conclusions on the cult of Pan in the region at Bernand 1977: 269–78). Even where the name of the god does not appear, and the graffito consists of a simple signature, it is still likely, in common with graffiti-practice at sites elsewhere in Egypt and in other languages, that the act of signature is in itself intended as a prayer or appeal to the god (Naveh 1979). As the god of wild places, Pan would be an appropriate recourse for help in desert travel, but, as noted by Lloyd in his review of Bernand's study of the Paneion graffiti, we are clearly also dealing here with a continuation of long-established cultic traditions at the site of El Kanais, under a new Greek gloss (Lloyd 1975: 302). Unfortunately, lack of archaeological excavation at the site, and the apparent absence of Demotic or Hieratic graffiti, means that we cannot assess changes and continuities in this worship over time. But the identification of the Pan of the later graffiti with the gods of the pharaonic shrine is clear. As already noted, the Amen-Re of Seti's shrine incorporates elements from the iconography of the god Min, associated among other things, with the eastern desert and identified by the Greeks with their god Pan (see e.g. the bilingual dedication to *Pani Euodōi* and *Min Kbt* on a Ptolemaic period sphinx from Koptos published by Vleeming 2001: 82–3). Two pieces of epigraphic evidence from elsewhere in the eastern desert make it clear that *Pan Euodos* of the Hellenistic and Roman periods is none other than Min: a Greek stele with a dedication to Pan, bearing an incised figure of Min, and an ostrakon found nearby which makes the identification all the more explicit with the words *Min Panos* (Bernand 1977: 241–3, no. 83).²

As will be considered further in the following section, many of the graffiti at El Kanais are highly formulaic. The name of the dedicator appears in the nominative and that of the god Pan in the dative, often with the epithets *euodos* 'of-the-good-road' (by far the most common), *euargos* 'of-the-good-hunt', *epēkoos* 'who-listens-to-prayer', or *sōtēr* 'saviour'. Pan is considered directly responsible for an individual's safe return from desert travel. Although many of the graffiti are very brief (e.g. no. 11: 'Theophilos, to Pan, year 37'; no. 19: 'Isidoros salutes Pan'), it is common for dedicators to state that they have been 'saved' from some specified or unspecified (e.g. no. 78) dangers of desert travel. Interestingly, it is the human rather than physical geography of the desert which most often merits mention, with a number thanking Pan for having completed a safe journey 'among the Troglodytes' (nos. 3, 13, 18, 43, 44 [an entire company of soldiers], 47, 60, 61, 62, 82, 90). Perhaps the indigenous peoples of the eastern desert hills

were the danger foremost in the minds of travellers in the region (Adams 2007: 216–7), or perhaps they stand in a metaphorical sense for the barbarous and dangerous conditions in the desert in general.

A few inscriptions are more eloquent, with a concentration of four or five longer or more sophisticated graffiti (some are in verse and in good literary Greek) engraved on the walls or columns of the temple itself. Here, we even find a few more specific details on the destinations of travellers through El Kanais:

Pan of-the-good-road, Zenodotos son of Glaukos has given you this [ornament? altar?], having come back safe from the land of the Sabaeans [modern Yemen].

(Bernand 1972: no. 2)

(I dedicate) this to Pan of-the-good-hunt who-listens-to-prayer, who has saved me from the land of the Troglodytes, having suffered greatly in redoubled hardships, and from the sacred land which produces myrrh and from among the Koloboi. You saved us when we went off course on the Red Sea, and you sent a breeze to our ships when they were rolling on the ocean, whistling in shrill breaths in the reeds, until you yourself brought us to the port of Ptolemais, steering us with your hands, most skillful from the hunt. Now, friend, save the city which Alexander first founded by Egypt, the most famous of cities. I proclaim your power, friend Pan, having come back safe to Ptolemais (?) . . .

(Bernand 1972: no. 8)

Accessing anything of cult activity at the site beyond the graffiti is hindered by lack of archaeological investigation. It is probable that individuals may have left offerings or altars, in addition to writing their prayers or thanks-offerings on the temple wall or rockface (discussed by Bernand 1972: 26). The difficulty of transporting materials for altars or stelae, or manufacturing them at the site, may have been a contributing factor in making graffiti so popular there. But there are indications that marking one's passage across the desert epigraphically, a level of physical engagement with the rocky and barren desert landscape from which one prayed to Pan for protection, was in itself an important 'ritual' at El Kanais, as at so many other places in the eastern desert. The desert landscape was not merely a picturesque backdrop to these graffiti, but the very reason for their existence and, as will be considered in greater depth below, many of the individual graffiti show a keen awareness of their immediate local context on the rockface at El Kanais, and among other graffiti.

In a number of cases, a graffiti writer is keen to stress that this is a repeat visit to the Paneion, for a second (nos. 49: 'Menneas and Theodoros, of Sillyon, for the second time [*to deuteron*]'; 89: unnamed citizens of Sillyon, possibly identical to those of no. 49) or even third time (nos. 24, 73, 87,

90). As noted above, many of the graffiti mention having been 'saved' or returned safely from a journey, but—as well as those who simply dedicate 'to Pan' without specifying why they do so—several make explicit appeals on their own behalf (*hyper autou*: e.g. nos. 36, 37, 38, 72) or that of another person, suggesting that they are asking for Pan's protection from a *future* danger. A possible pattern of activity at the site is that travellers passing the watering-station at the Paneion on their way east into the desert—the site is only 55 km, a few days' journey, from the Nile—stopped to ask Pan for protection and on the way back stopped again to record their thanks, perhaps making an offering on either occasion or both. Adams (2007: 217) views the Paneion as a liminal space, a threshold between the safety and civilisation of the Nile Valley, and the dangers of the desert. Individuals of all statuses and positions might participate in marking their passage through this space, whether literate and literary types who wrote in verse on the temple itself, or those who simply scratched their name on the rock-face, if they were able.

'ZENON CAME UP HERE TOO'

As well as their concern about the desert journey, another way in which the El Kanais graffiti demonstrate a certain internal coherence is in their awareness of their immediate context. Several authors self-consciously commemorate the epigraphic act itself: 'Apollonios, son of Horos from Apollonopolis, wrote (this)' (no. 31; cf. no. 52), 'Demetrios wrote (this) when he came here' (no. 32), 'Pasithemis, son of Apteres, Cretan, wrote me' (no. 5). Although the graffiti just quoted do not mention Pan at all, and seem to be written in the express expectation of being read at some future point, the desire to mark one's presence and have it noted by other travellers was, of course, not incompatible with religious motives. One late Ptolemaic graffito, written inside a sketch drawing of an altar, reads:

To Pan of-the-good-road and Apollo, Apollon wrote (this), making a permanent record of this dedication. Having come back safe, I made on behalf of my father an offering of Indian myrrh (?) . . . and incense.

(Bernard 1972: no. 72)

Apollon's unnamed father, we might suspect, did not make it back from the journey as safely as his son. This graffito is interesting for its highly self-conscious emphasis on the permanence of Apollon's dedication (like the representation of the physical altar inside which it is written), and expectation that it will be read by others. One or two of the graffiti show not just an expectation of being read themselves, but indications that their authors have read the other graffiti around them before writing their own. Directly underneath the dedication of the garrison of soldiers (no. 10) on a column

of the temple portico, one man has noted: 'I too came to you, Pan, [from Thebes]: Poseideos, the son of Athenion' (no. 4). Up on the rockface behind the temple, another has written 'Look here [lit. *tode* 'this'; Bernand translates as '*voici*']: Zenon came up here too, year 13, (day) 10 of the month Pakhon' (no. 71).

Even where we do not have such clues, the level of uniformity in the dedicatory formulae is an argument in itself that their authors have read the other graffiti, not just out of curiosity, but also as a guide to writing their own. Although a few of the graffiti or inscriptions from the site are of a good literary quality and even in verse, the reasonably high percentage who write only their name, or name and patronymic, may have been constrained by their level of literacy as much as their willingness to write anything more. The papyrological evidence from Hellenistic and Roman period Egypt reveals many individuals who were illiterate, forced to employ the services of others to compose personal letters and legal documents (Youtie 1975). More interesting with regard to the graffiti at El Kanais, however, are the large number of semi-literates, who were capable only of writing slowly, with difficulty, of producing a restricted range of texts, or simply their own name. The ability to write one's own name—allowing a person, for example, to act as signatory to a document—did not require a lengthy education but was nevertheless a useful skill. The passive literacy of such individuals could be rather different from their active literacy: they might be able to read a piece of writing, but be unable to produce a similar text for themselves (Cribiore 1996; 2001). Even for a near-illiterate, or for someone who could read more readily than he could write, it must have been easy to recognise that the formula 'N, to Pan-of-the-good-road' was the standard form of dedication at El Kanais, the 'done thing', and to copy verbatim from the graffiti left by previous visitors. As well as providing an opportunity, a 'crib sheet', the presence of other graffiti may also have constrained writers, establishing a precedent which dictated what it was considered appropriate to write.

Spatially, as well as in terms of content, the graffiti show an awareness of each other: they cluster in the same places (some, as noted above, may be positioned directly underneath an earlier graffiti), but they also have a tendency not to encroach upon one another (Bernand 1972: 25). As Bernand notes, the local topography itself dictated that visitors would usually write their graffiti in the same places as earlier travellers (Bernand 1972: 24). All the favoured graffiti spots are north-facing, like the temple itself, and places where a writer would have been sheltered from the sun, and best able to catch the breeze and have a good look-out over a long distance. Lower down on the rock face, graffiti sites correspond to sheltered folds in the cliff. Elsewhere in the eastern and western desert, the tendency of graffiti and rock art to cluster in places where the writer would have been comfortable and shaded from the sun can allow modern recorders to predict likely sites with some accuracy (see e.g. Morrow and Morrow 2002: 13).

The one major contrast in the distribution of the El Kanais graffiti is between writings on the rockface (the majority), and on the walls or columns of the pharaonic temple. On the basis of the smaller number of inscriptions made on the temple itself, Bernand argues that 'not everyone was able to access the sanctuary, and visitors had to take advantage of exceptional circumstances (doubtless the absence of the guard or the priest) to engrave their name in the hypostyle hall' (Bernand 1972: 23). But these were not the circumstances under which most of the 'graffiti' in the temple were written.³ Since the quality of writing of some leaves a little to be desired, they struck Bernand as being like 'individual furtive acts of adoration', but many were carved and then painted in, not a quick and sneaky act to be undertaken while the caretaker's back was turned. They are also often in highly visible places. Nor are they always especially brief. One factor which does appear to have had some bearing on an individual's tendency to write on the temple rather than on the rockface outside is their official position and status. The dedications of the garrisoning soldiers from the unit of Neoptolemos, and of Demetrios the well-shaft cleaner (nos. 10 and 12) both come from the temple, and that of the *archisomatopylax* and *strategos* (no. 46) was found on an altar nearby. While access to the temple may not have been restricted to such persons, they appear to have been more likely than private individuals to write in or near the temple, or at least to record their official mandate in such circumstances.

Positing a hierarchical distinction between graffiti on the temple and those on the rockface is not necessarily, however, the way to go about tackling the question. Given the long tradition of graffiti writing, and the demonstrable awareness writers show of the other graffiti around them, dedicating to Pan on the rock was a tradition in itself and—whether or not consciously so—a more immediate connection with the desert landscape dedicators sought Pan's protection from. In this respect, Seti I's description of his desert journey and provision for travellers; the concerns of Hellenistic-period Greeks to be saved by Pan 'from the Trogodytes'; and even the nineteenth-century Cretan Lychounes' records of his repeat visits, all demonstrate the same concerns. The graffiti and inscriptions at the site are in a dialogue with both the desert landscape and each other. This is made explicit in the frequent awareness in the Greek graffiti of the other writings which precede them, and of the future visitors who will in turn read these texts and make their own. The act of writing, of physical engagement with the rockface or the temple walls, is repeated in such a way that even crudely scratched onomastic graffiti at El Kanais, therefore, can hardly be described as 'informal'.

NOTES

1. After writing this chapter, I was made aware of a study by Adams (2007) which explores similar themes. Adams uses the graffiti from El Kanais and other sites in the Egyptian eastern desert to look at wider questions of

geographical and ethnographical knowledge in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the perception of the desert as a sacred space, as well as inter-textuality in the graffiti. The present study is a more localised treatment of El Kanais, its graffiti and inscriptions, over the *longue durée*.

2. Two notable exceptions to the general rule of dedications to Pan/Min are the graffiti of two Jewish travellers in praise simply of *ton theon*, i.e. the Jewish god (Bernand 1972: nos. 34 and 42). But even these fall into the pattern of making a prayer or thanks for divine help in the desert.
3. This also misses the point that in many periods leaving graffiti on pharaonic monuments was an integral part of the Egyptian 'tourist experience', for local and foreign travellers (New Kingdom Egypt and Nubia: Peden 2001: 290; prominent Greeks and Romans on the colossi of Memnon: Casson 2001: 141). Nor are the nineteenth- and twentieth-century travellers' graffiti from El Kanais an isolated case. The pyramids at Giza bear graffiti from such eminent individuals as Richard Lepsius (in hieroglyphs, over the entrance of the Great Pyramid, 1842; on travellers' graffiti at the Great Pyramid, see in general Goyon 1944) and Giovanni Belzoni (inside the burial chamber of the pyramid of Khafre, 1818). Belzoni, ever the self-promoting showman, was an especially prolific graffitier of sites throughout Egypt.

9 Blogging Rome

Graffiti as Speech-Act and Cultural Discourse

Peter Keegan

Memory is the enduring perception in the mind of things and words
and arrangement.¹

(Rhetorica ad Herennium 1.3.4)

One of the enduring images many Australians associate with the 1999 New Years' Eve millennium celebration is that of the word 'eternity' appearing in large illuminated letters on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This word, also seen by over four billion people worldwide at the end of the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games in September of 2000, represents a significant instance of how a single practitioner of graffiti writing can 'speak' to a wide cross-section of people about a variety of historical, social and cultural issues.

The graffitist in question, Arthur Stace, chalked 'eternity' almost half a million times in handsome copperplate cursive writing on footpaths across greater metropolitan Sydney over a period of thirty-five years (1932–1967). For most of this time, Stace's identity as author of the unvarying graffiti remained unknown, unlike the widespread notoriety of his textual remainder. Though a ward of the state—a barely literate petty criminal and alcoholic whose sisters were compelled to prostitution and whose brothers died as derelicts—Stace was responsible for inscribing a message at once inspiring, cryptic and confronting to men and women of differing social identities across the developing urban landscape of twentieth-century Sydney.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984: 128) saw the ordinary inhabitants of cities who experience urban space as pedestrians or *Wandermänner* 'whose bodies follow the thick and thin of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it.' According to this view, the city is 'produced' every day, inscribed with the quotidian lives and journeys of its citizens—journeys that 'create the city but elud[e] visibility'. Further, every city is spatially organised to the extent that there is a pre-existing 'system', offering a set of possibilities and restrictions that each pedestrian must negotiate. This 'system' is analogous to a kind of language. Like speech does to language, so walking integrates the dimension of time into city space. Pedestrianism may therefore be said to resemble a kind of speech.²

Taking this idea further, if walking is a kind of speech-act, then graffiti (particularly ancient graffiti, marked on a built environment fundamentally

pedestrian in nature) can be likened to a form of writing not only in the sense of inscription but in the sense of memorialising certain speech-acts of pedestrianism. Stace's 'eternity' is an apt exemplar for ancient graffiti practices, charting the inscriber's navigation through and creation of the material, lived reality of urban space (Kirkpatrick 1997).

In relation to the study of ancient graffiti, what is important to note about these ideas is how historical, cultural and sociological contexts can combine to inform audiences (or layers of audience)—at once historically contemporary with *and* distant from the writer and the writing—about the individual, society and a plethora of perspectives on the wider world. Graffiti, in this sense, are *more* 'present' in the world than other texts; or, in the words cited above of the unknown author of *De Ratione Dicendi ad C. Herennium*, graffiti instantiates 'the enduring perception of things and words and arrangement'.³

My rationale in this chapter is to consider the practice of inscribing graffiti in relation to issues of literacy, culture and memory from an explicitly contextualised and theorised standpoint. First, I will examine the usefulness of categories of memory in identifying types of graffiti. These examples are situated historically and culturally in the classical Mediterranean of the late Roman Republic and early Empire, and geographically in the southern Campanian colony of Pompeii. Second, I will consider the applicability of philosophical, physical, cognitive and socio-scientific theories of memory, especially the concepts of 'memory traces' and 'representational realism', to evaluating the cultural significance of graffiti found at this site in relation to literacy. I will also comment briefly on the relationship between an oral-literate practice like graffiti and modern messaging practices that incorporate text and images. In each of these sections, I will illustrate what we can learn by re-inserting certain graffiti listed in *CIL* 4 into their topographical context. I am particularly interested in testing the claims made by Harris (1989: 260) that 'less is to be learned from [graffiti] . . . than has sometimes been realized', and Savunen (1997: 9), that 'stone inscriptions [. . .] are more informative and pose fewer problems with respect to reliability'. Throughout, I will take the only surviving coherent treatise in Latin on mnemo-technical practice, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, as my entry-point and guide to Roman perspectives on remembering and forgetting.⁴ In sum, I would like to establish the degree to which a study of Pompeian *graphio inscripta* can contribute to arguments about the uses of literacy, memory and discursive cultural practice in the Roman world.

MEMORY AS A TOOL FOR CLASSIFYING GRAFFITI

Now we shall pass over to the memory, the treasure-house of inventions, the custodian of all parts of rhetoric.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.28.1)

In a synthesis of historical and scientific approaches to the study of memory, Small and Tatum (1995: 150) tell historians of the ancient world that ‘[r]emembering is at root a process of reconstruction, if not downright creativity’. Taking this as a corollary to the description of *memoria* as *thesaurum inventorum* cited here, I would like to introduce varieties

Table 9.1 Total Number of Graffiti and Dipinti in All Media at Pompeii
According to M-type

Categories of graffiti (CIL 4)	M-type		
	1 Skills	2 Facts	3 Experience
programmata: <i>antiquissima</i> [electoral notices: oldest]		116	
tituli pictae: <i>recentiores</i> [painted notices: more recent]		3163	
edicta munerum edendorum [announcements of publicly displayed games]		69	
graphio inscripta [inscribed with a <i>graphium</i>]			4504
alphabetum [alphabets]	160		
quadratariorum notae [stonemasons' marks]		380 ¹	
uasa fictilia: <i>consules</i> [earthenware containers: consular names]		44	
uasa fictilia: <i>uina, garum, liquamen, mel, aliaque</i> [contents]		484	
uasa fictilia: <i>nomina</i> [names]		528	
uasa fictilia: <i>litterae incertae significations</i> [numerals, single letters, marks of uncertain meaning]		456	
uasa fictilia: <i>graphio exarata</i> [scratched with a <i>graphium</i>]		103	
uasa fictilia: <i>Graeca</i> [Greek]		627	
tabulae ceratae [wax tablets]		155	
Total number ²	350	5935	4504

¹ Where totals appear between two columns, the graffiti can be classified as both M-types (in this instance both 1 and 2).

² Where inscriptions appear in more than one M-type category, they are distributed evenly for calculating the total.

of remembering adduced by modern philosophers and psychologists as a tool for organising graffiti. After establishing the extent, location and current typology of written, incised and painted inscriptions in Pompeii, I hope to show how categories of memory can usefully classify ancient Pompeian graffiti.⁵

The major source of information relating to the study of graffiti in the Roman cities of Vesuvius is the fourth volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL), *Inscriptiones Parietariae Pompeianae Herculanenses Stabianae*, and the accompanying supplements.⁶ The taxonomy of painted, incised and written inscriptions recorded at Pompeii is clear. However, when attempting to determine the find-spots of individual graffiti as described in CIL 4, let alone trying to distinguish the subject matter of these inscriptions, it soon becomes clear that this separation is organisational in a limited sense.

To qualify the empirical designations of CIL 4, recent work on types of memory can help. Broaching current debates about ways of characterising memory, Sutton (2004: 2) lists three varieties of remembering: (1) 'habit' or 'procedural' memory (remembering *how*); (2) 'propositional' or 'semantic' memory (remembering *what*); and (3) 'recollective', 'episodic', or 'autobiographical' memory (remembering *that*). The first type applies to remembering embodied skills, the second, to facts and conceptual information, and the third to experienced events and episodes.

Applying this typology of memory to the categories of graffiti, dipinti and *tabulae ceratae* (Table 9.1), we can identify a great deal of the surviving cursive inscriptions as types (1) and (2): alphabets, stonemasons' marks, information incised on pottery and contractual records tell us a great deal about *what* was done in a variety of utilitarian contexts, and some idea of *how* that work was organised; in addition to *what* happened in specific political and social contexts, election posters and advertisements for beast-hunts and gladiatorial contests provide us with insight into the mechanisms underpinning *how* significant moments in the cultural calendar of Roman Pompeii were arranged. Naturally, individual items in any category of graffiti or dipinti can reflect more than one memory-type. For example, in addition to the facts of candidature in relation to a particular campaign for election to the local magistracies, an electoral poster may contain information about the skills or experiences of a candidate, his advocate or supporting group, and/or individual(s) painting the *programma*. Similarly, taking account of the space in which an alphabet is marked or incised, and the data contained in nearby graffiti, we may learn or infer not simply something about the literacy skills of the person(s) participating in the process of inscribing it, but also factual details or experiences relating to the authorship, purpose and/or the cultural context of the sequence of letters in Latin or Greek. In general terms, however, the majority of each category of graffiti or dipinti seems

to conform to one of the memory-types more than the others. In this regard, a significant number of ephemeral inscriptions recorded in *CIL* 4, namely those subsumed under the rubric of *graphio inscripta*, conform chiefly to type (3). This classification, according to what I will describe as M-type, can be applied to a variety of data. For instance, looking at Langner's detailed list (2001: 22-3), which excludes ceramic and wax inscriptions, we can usefully isolate particular graffiti categories according to text- and M-type (Table 9.2). It is the type of written, incised or painted inscription displaying the third category of memory which the next section will consider.

Table 9.2 Total Number of Graffiti and Dipinti (excluding ceramic and wax inscriptions) at Pompeii According to M-type

Categories of written graffiti (Langner)	M-type		
	1 Skills	2 Facts	3 Experience
Single names			718 ¹
Greetings or salutations			198
Erotic inscriptions with defamatory contents			97
Commemorative dedications			67
Congratulations			47
Insults or curses			12
Maxims and verses (including poetic citations)			94
Notices/items of information and announcements	78		
Gladiator inscriptions			36
Household notices	68		
Numbers without words		256	
Date statements without further details		37	
Mythological names		26	
Artist signatures	93 ²		93 ²
Individual letters (mostly abbreviated names and initials)			154
Alphabets	52		
Total number ³	106.5	834	1045.5

¹ Where totals appear between two columns, the graffiti can be classified as either M-type.

² Artist signatures can be classified as M-type 1 or 3. The figure given here is for the total number of graffiti across both categories.

³ Where inscriptions appear in more than one M-type category, they are distributed evenly for calculating the total.

MEMORY AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING GRAFFITI

There are two (kinds of) memory: one natural, the other artificial. Natural memory is that which is engrafted in our minds, born simultaneously with thought; artificial memory is that which is confirmed by purpose and a protocol of injunctions.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.28.4-5)

Brewer (1996: 60–1) defines ‘episodic’ or ‘autobiographical’ memory as ‘a “re-living” of the individual’s phenomenal experience from a specific moment in their past’. Built into this concept of memory is a reliance on the existence of some kind of ‘memory-trace’ as a continuous bridge across the temporal gap causally connecting past and present (Martin and Deutscher 1966; Shoemaker 1970; Perner 2000; Sutton 2004: 4). According to this view, we can be aware of the past just by virtue of a trace in the present. If correct, a memory trace could mediate our historical perception between past and present (Sutton 2004: 5; cf. Schwartz 1996). In other words, there exists an archaeological relationship between the physicality of graffiti traces and the temporality of memory traces.

Importantly, in this model of autobiographical memory, we assign causal significance to specific events and incorporate a sense of the uniqueness and significance of particular choices and actions into our plans and our conceptions of how to live (Campbell 1994: 37–72; Hoerl 1999: 240–7). Applying these ideas to the practice of cursive and graphic inscription in Roman Pompeii, it is possible to suggest that the act of inscribing graffiti simultaneously represents the conception of time created and assigned by episodic memory, a kind of continuity between experiences and remembering, and denotes a personal need to express individual life-choices.

Of course, as historians, we are very much aware that the causal connections between events and traces, and between traces and recollections, may be multiple, indirect and context-dependent. In cognitive terms, ‘the engram (the stored fragments of an episode) and the memory [. . .] are not the same thing’ (Schacter 1996: 70). As such, the relationship between memory traces and graffiti is adduced as one of a number of possible causal and explanatory models.

With this in mind, consider the following description of memory:

We see the traces laid down by the processing of each input as contributing to the composite, superimposed memory representation. [. . .] Each trace contributes to the composite, but the characteristics of the particular experiences tend nevertheless to be preserved, at least until they are overridden by cancelling characteristics of other traces. Also, the traces of one stimulus pattern can coexist with the traces of other stimuli, within the same composite memory trace.

(McClelland and Rumelhart 1986: 193)

Replacing ‘trace’ or ‘traces’ with ‘graffito’ or ‘graffiti’ can integrate this dynamic theory into the socio-cultural milieu of ancient graffiti practice.

Take, for example, the centre of commercial and legal activity at Pompeii, the Basilica, located at the southwest corner of the city’s forum. Scrawled, scratched or painted on the walls of the Basilica, 191 graffiti have been recorded in *CIL* 4.⁷ The cursive and graphic disposition of these graffiti conforms remarkably to the representation of the process of remembering articulated in the model of superimposed memory traces. The cluster of graffiti listed as *CIL* 4.1837 may serve as a specific instance of the process;

1. ‘If you can, but do not want to, why do you put off joy? Why do you foster hope and tell me continually to come back tomorrow? Therefore, make me die, you who force me to live without you. The reward for the good surely will not be to be put to the rack.’ (ll. 1–5)
2. ‘What hope has taken away, hope surely returns to the lover.’ (ll. 6–8)
3. ‘May he who reads this never have to read another thing in future.’ (ll. 9–10)
4. ‘May he who writes above never be well/safe.’ (l. 10)
5. ‘You speak truly.’ (l. 11)
6. ‘Congratulations, Hedys!’ (ll. 11–12).⁸

If not for the panel of the Basilica wall that preserves this collection of cursive poetry and prose, the transcription and English translation would fail absolutely to convey the spontaneous, energetic quality of the elegiac dialogue and prose addenda inscribed onto the northern wall of the Pompeian Basilica.⁹ This extended conversation about the nature of love, scratched in a variety of different hands, preserves for us distinct patterns of activity associated with graffiti practice in Pompeii. In the opening elegiac couplets and the hexameter that follows, explicit echoes of Ovid, Tibullus and Virgil speak directly to Gigante’s contention of a cultural collaboration between provincial Pompeii and Rome (Gigante 1979: 26; cf. Varone 2002: 103–4). Engaging as interlocutors within a recognisable literary tradition—a tradition produced by the elite but consumed in a variety of performative contexts by a broader cross-section of Roman society—the reflections of these *scriptores*, literary and conversational, resemble the composite, enduring dispositional states that psychologists postulate as part of the memory process (Sutton 1998; 2004: 10). To paraphrase the excerpt from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* cited earlier, the words of these Pompeian graffitists, whether expressions of specific personal memories, the reworking of remembered Latin lyric poetry, or individual responses to shared emotional states, are ‘engrafted’ as external representations on the walls of the Basilica; the transmission and transformation of these memory-traces are ‘confirmed’ by the ‘purpose’

of the inscribers and the ‘protocol of injunctions’ comprising the form and content of the graffiti.¹⁰

In addition to their physicality, it is also possible to consider the temporality of these traces. Given an historical context constituted almost exclusively of material culture, Pompeian graffiti, like other categories of archaeological materiality, literally mark the past. In this respect, the built fabric of the Basilica, for example, provides the material preconditions for patterns of urban behaviour, and the marking in that constructed environment of textual and graphic messages reflects the interplay of these actions overlapping through time. It is because of this interdependent relationship between time, space and material culture that Pompeian graffiti provide us with a window on the memory-traces of contiguous

Table 9.3 Graffiti Clusters of 50 or More in Privately-Owned Spaces (total: 786)

<i>House</i>	<i>Number of recorded graffiti</i>	<i>Reference</i>
I.7.1, 20: <i>Casa di C. Cuspius Pansa</i> (or <i>Paquius Proculus</i>)	86	<i>CIL</i> 4.8067--8135
I.10.4: <i>Casa dei QQ. Pop-paei Sabini</i> (or <i>Casa di Menandro</i>)	147	<i>CIL</i> 4.8285--8357
V.2.i: <i>Casa delle nozze d'argento</i>	76	<i>CIL</i> 4.4152--4220
V.5.3: <i>Casa dei Gladiatori</i>	152	<i>CIL</i> 4.4280--4427
VII.7.5	73	<i>CIL</i> 4.4713--4785
VII.16.17-22: <i>Casa di Fabio Rufo</i>	78	Giordano 1966: 73--89; Solín 1975: 243--266
IX.2.26	65	<i>CIL</i> 4.5001--5060
<i>Villa dei Misteri</i>	108	<i>CIL</i> 4.9176--9247

Table 9.4 Graffiti Clusters of 50 or More in Public Buildings or on Exterior Walls of Discrete Structures (total: 824)

<i>Building</i>	<i>Number of recorded graffiti</i>	<i>Reference</i>
VIII.1.1, 2: <i>basilica</i>	193	<i>CIL</i> 4.1780--1952, 4864--4867
VII.7.18-20: <i>lupanar</i>	131	<i>CIL</i> 4.2173--2296
II.7: <i>grand palaestra</i>	295	<i>CIL</i> 4.8518--8814
VII.1: <i>thermae Stabianae</i>	56	<i>CIL</i> 4.2077--2126
IX.5.18	149	<i>CIL</i> 4.5108--5157

social engagements at specific moments across variously defined historical periods.

This is not an isolated instance of clustered or superimposed cursive and graphic inscriptions.¹¹ The distribution and spatial density of graffiti in Pompeii are considerable (see figure 1.2). Eliminating single instances from tabulation and focusing on clusters of 50 and more (a statistically significant grouping unlikely to have occurred by chance), it can be seen that the practice occurs throughout the city, though not on every available surface, as Mouritsen rightly notes in a forthcoming article on the graffiti in and around the Insula of the Menander (Mouritsen forthcoming).¹² Clustering is common in larger houses and those with eight to ten small rooms on the ground floor (with some more space above). There are also a considerable number of graffiti-clusters within the lower ranges found in units with four to five rooms on the ground floor (and some upstairs).¹³ While these distributions cannot help us to determine the status, sex and occupation of the writers and of any expected readers (except in isolated instances where the painter, marker or inscriber identifies one or more of these indicators of identity, see Benefiel this volume), they remove the need to perpetuate the views (Cavallo 1983: 175; Harris 1989: 260) that the great majority of these graffiti were written *either* by people of low social condition *or* 'by a few hundred literate slaves and schoolboys from highly respectable families' (Harris 1989: 260). Importantly for the purpose of this discussion, tracking pedestrian interactions with Pompeian graffiti in relation to the locations of particular M- and text-types clustering in large and small spatial contexts reveals a variety of sub- and inter-texts that may be regarded as instances of popular cultural discourse.

GRAFFITI, LITERACY AND THE ART OF MEMORY

Artificial memory is (a) ascertained or established from, or (b) supported by *places* and *images*.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.29.5)

Regardless of one's gender, social status, civic position or economic condition, the first and foremost requirement for writing text as graffiti was to be functionally literate, or to be able to copy from a 'script' written by someone who was functionally or scribally literate. While literacy experts do not agree about how to define literacy (Wagner et al. 1999), and there are many possible interpretations of the word, it is important to recognise the existence of a continuum of literacy levels (from functional to scribal) and the fact that what ultimately matters is the ability to grasp the meaning(s) of a text in a specific context and develop critical judgment.

As a test of the applicability and adequacy of this non-dichotomous division, consider one of the better-known graffiti at Pompeii:

ADMIROR O PARIENS TE • NON CECIDISSE RVINIS • QVI TOT
SCRIPTORVM TAEDIA SVSTINEAS

I am amazed, O wall, that you have not fallen in ruins, you who support the tediousness of so many writers.

(CIL 4.1904, 1906, 2461, 2487)

This graffito is scratched by different *scriptores* into the surfaces of three buildings at widely separated locations in the city: the Basilica (twice), the Large Theatre and the Amphitheatre. In terms of de Certeau's conceptualisation of urban space and its relation to the *parole* of graffiti, it is possible to trace a variety of alternative pedestrian journeys through Pompeii, using the inscribed instances of the ADMIROR message as a guide. Traversing the city, the pedestrian would encounter a potential constellation of incidental social performances: the rapid-fire calculus of conspicuous consumption adhering to the market-place economy; the cut-and-thrust of philosophical, legal and commercial rhetoric; improvised and crafted poetic compositions, dramatic performances and public readings; ball-games, dicing and table-games; song, dance and instrumental music; lullabies, nursery rhymes and folktales; funerary laments and the rituals of beast-hunt and gladiatorial combat. It should be clear how appropriately pervasive attestations of civic epigraphy and graffiti practices participate in this flexible and potent matrix of daily cultural diffusion.

The relationship between this discursive network, the quotidian opportunities for 'memorialisation' on offer to the Pompeian *Wandersmänner*, and the 'places' and 'images' adduced by the Auctor *ad Herennium* should also be noted. Following Horsfall's idea (2003: 25–6) that a music-orientated, memory-based oral culture might have co-existed in the Roman world with the stiffer but more familiar world of Virgil, Tacitus and their readers, the ADMIROR inscription neatly encapsulates the various levels by which a pedestrian might participate in the Rabelaisian cultural streetscape of Pompeii. Whether or not the viewer recognises the elegant simplicity of the inscribed elegiac verse, or on a technical level notices the metrical error in *admiror* (scanned with a short 'i', usually long), is not as important as the possibility that the writer anticipated the message would be read and remembered. On one level, the composer attests to the prevalence of spontaneous inscriptions in the city; on another, the irony of participating in the same process is a supple and durable pleasure for the thoughtful passer-by. Anticipating Juvenal's complaint (*Sat.* 1.7–13) that the recitation of stale themes in wealthy patrons' colonnades threaten to crack their marble columns with a surfeit of rhetoric, the graffito displays both the right combination of generic *imitatio* and creative *variatio*, and the right blend of poetic *voluptas* and moral *utilitas*, appreciated by consumers of Roman literary and popular culture. That the *taedia* of others cannot really be alleviated by the recitation of an epigraphic *topos* is a stale joke along with all the others.

Here, it is dangerous to assign a general definition to an ancient population on the basis of a collection of data comprising a number of individual texts. Nonetheless, it is possible to see these consumers as constituting that proportion of the community familiar with the marked urban environment of Pompeii—painted signs advertising pragmatic aspects of city life from the relationship between a local association and the political process, and games in the amphitheatre, to the letting of shops and apartments; marked and incised messages about love, religion and the imperial family; formal inscriptions concerning civic duty and patronage, and those with an appreciation of the written and performed texts of elite cultural production.¹⁴

Another series of texts confirms the usefulness of these kinds of inscription as sources of evidence for oral-literate cultural exchange in the late Republican and early Imperial Roman world. On the base of a wall, to the right of a communicating door in the so-called *caupona* of Euxinus (II.1.10), Della Corte recorded the following item:

[VENIMVS H]OC CVPIDI MVLTO MAGIS IRE CVPIMVS

Desirous we came here, much more did we want to go.

(CIL 4.9849; Della Corte 1958: 84, no. 30)

Close to the city's amphitheatre, this public house would have hosted crowds of locals and visitors enjoying a day's entertainment at one of the games we know to have been advertised in eye-catching red and black paint on the plastered walls of many of Pompeii's major thoroughfares. Whether this verse graffito was itself painted (as the other graffiti found in this space were) or scratched into the lower wooden frame of the wall, the excavation report does not make clear. What is interesting for the purposes of this discussion, as *inter alia* recently Kruschwitz (2006) and Benefiel (forthcoming), is the fact that versions of the same cursive trace (in partial or complete form) have been recorded in nine separate locations within the walls of Pompeii, not to mention single instances in neighbouring Herculaneum and distant Gallia Narbonensis.¹⁵

Like the ADMIROR inscription, which may be charted in the visible civic spaces of Pompeii, we can follow the VENIMVS graffito around a variety of threshold (liminal) and internal contexts in the city: access points to places of work or meeting, private areas set aside for leisure or entertainment activities, domestic environments: on the column of a *portico* identified as the house of a certain P. Varennius Zethus, *libertus* (VI.1.7: the so-called *Casa delle Vestali*); in a chamber at the northern side of the *orchestra* entrance to the Large Theatre (VIII.7.20, 21, 27, 30); written in charcoal; on the plastered wall of a garden room in the so-called *Casa della Soffitta* (V.3.4); on the column of a *portico* in the house of Paquius Proculus (I.7.1, 20); under another verse graffito, on a wall of a small artisan's home (I.10.1); written in tall letters lightly incised to the left of a doorway in the hypothetical *sodalicum* (or club premises) of the Paridianum (fans of

the pantomime-actor Paris?) (III.5.3); on the wall of a vestibule belonging to the house and shop of Sutoria Primigenia (I.8.2); and two instances on a staircase leading from the peristyle to the upper floor in the house of Fabius Rufus (VII.16.17, 20–22).¹⁶

The probability that this verse belongs to the performative tradition of Latin elegiac poetry is high (Kruschwitz 2006). By the same token, the stability of its transmission across Pompeii and beyond registers the cultural impact of writing on the display of that tradition. In two exceptional versions of this *carmen epigraphicum*, however, we can detect the interplay of oral and literate symbolic networks as they access, manage and manipulate the memory-traces of meaning, imagery and sound-pattern contained in the poetic composition. The first (CIL 4.1227) engages literally with the constraints of shattered expectations, transforming the disappointment of Pompeii into anticipation of a return to the ancestral cosmopolis: ‘We came here desirous, much more did we want to go, so that we may see Rome and our hearth’ (*Venimus | huc cupidi, | multo | magis | hire <cupimus>, ut | liceat | nostros | visere | Roma lares*). The second (Solin 1975: 266, no. 57) addresses the city’s deceptive allure more imaginatively, interposing a significant affective impediment to departure: ‘We came here desirous, much more did we want to go, but that girl restrains our feet’ (*Venimus h[oc c]upidi, multo magis ire cupimus, | set retinet nostros illa puella pedes*). On the one hand, in keeping with the oral tradition of poetic language, schematic constraints preserve sequential information, imagery constraints preserve concrete, spatial information, and sound-pattern constraints preserve the exact wording (Rubin 1995: 62–3). On the other hand, the experienced sedimentations of memory and of individual emotion in memory, for all their obscurity and opacity to conscious or complete capture, interact with the medium of curative inscription, permitting the graffitists not only to ‘engraft’ a specific past, but to adapt or ‘reconstruct’ the present.

Small (1995: 160) argues that ‘the organizing principle that governs [written poetic composition in an oral-literate society] depends very much on literacy and the art of memory.’ Psychologists studying the processes of memory agree, adding that ‘various principles of plot construction ground our ordinary memory practices’ (Sutton 2004: 11). In relation to the study of memory in oral traditions, Rubin (1995) notes that language produced as speech is social (performative and participatory) and structured (fragmented and additive), and for a genre of oral tradition to continue, it must be retained and retold, spread among individuals and handed down from generation to generation.¹⁷ With respect to the serial registration of the VENIMVS verse graffito, these principles intersect remarkably with de Certeau’s pedestrian speech-acts and the mnemo-technical method of the Auctor *ad Herennium*. The mixed feelings of the memorialising graffitists at Pompeii trace ‘a continuous spatio-temporal route through all the narratives of memory, a route continuous with the present and future location of the remembering subject’ (Campbell 1997: 110; cf. de Certeau 1984).

BLOGGING AND THE ARS MEMORATIVA

Therefore, just as those who know the letters of the alphabet can write down what is dictated to them and read out what is written, likewise those who have learned mnemonics can set in places what they have heard and deliver it from memory.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.30.2)

There are four related practices in the modern world which better help us to understand the relationship between Roman graffiti-practices and Mediterranean epigraphic culture: the digital application of mobile phone technology known by the acronym SMS (Short Message Service); Web messaging applications like MSN, AIM, ICQ, QQ, Skype and (appropriately enough) Jabber; social networking facilities like Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Twitter; and the type of website known as a 'blog' (an abbreviation of the term 'weblog'). While the technical protocols involved in the transmission of messages via SMS or the internet have no bearing on this discussion, a variety of practical analogies can be drawn: the comparative ease with which the application has been incorporated into the lifestyle-practices of modern communities; the concomitant, widespread use of the texting or messaging facility; its popularity among young urbanites, older professionals, and the retired alike; and the multiple adaptations of spatial formation and vocabulary (spelling, character abbreviation, idiomatic usage, and so on. See further Shih 2009: 25–42). This is not to suggest that we should regard ancient graffiti as the equivalent of SMS, Web messaging, social networking or blogging as a technology, but rather as a guide to the way in which epigraphic culture in the ancient Mediterranean acted as an interface between orality and literacy in the production and consumption of meaning. As an example of this, one need only refer to the widespread use of abbreviations (*notae* or *sigla*) in Roman epigraphic culture. Whether single or retrograde letters, synthetic or analytical restrictions, repetitive terminating consonants, or supralineate marks, the practice of abbreviating words plays a ubiquitous role in the language of Latin inscriptions. While the ordinary inhabitant of Pompeii would not have encountered anything but a small percentage of the 31,000 or so recorded abbreviations,¹⁸ the likelihood that many of these were once used by a sub-group of the empire's linguistically heterogeneous speech community and eventually adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm speaks directly to the socio-linguistic relationship between inscriptions and Rome's oral-literate culture.

More significantly, the composer and executor of a graffiti-text or figure, like the sender of an SMS, web message or blog entry, but unlike ancient lapidary inscribers, is the *same* person.¹⁹ In the same way that the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is able to establish a conceptual relationship between the ability to read and write and the capacity to reconstruct

a procedure, a fact or an experience and ‘deliver it from memory’, so it is possible to view the interface between oral-literate culture and graffiti as intrinsic and substantial.²⁰

LOCI AND IMAGES IN THE COLONY OF VENUS

We term those things places (*loci*) which in brief are finished completely and notably either by nature or hand, so that we can understand them easily by natural memory; [places] such as a house, an intercolumnar space, a corner, an arch or the like.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.29.6)

Images (*imagines*) are forms, marks or simulacra of what we wish to remember. For example, if we want to recall the genus of a horse, of a lion, of an eagle, we must place their images on definite places (*loci*).

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.29.7)

The literal and conceptual links between acts of graffiti and the ancient nexus of orality, literacy and memory are seen no more clearly than in the articulation of the classical art of memory excerpted here. According to the unknown teacher of rhetoric, to successfully commit something of importance to memory, it is vital to put images on to places that are arranged in such a way as can be remembered in a particular order. It should be noted that the Auctor *ad Herennium* identifies ‘a choice of two analogies [provided by images], one for things (*res*), the other for words (*verba*)’.²¹ As our journey in pursuit of the ADMIROR and VENIMVS inscriptions suggests, and the cumulative weight of graffiti scratched, scrawled and painted on many surfaces of the city’s fabric confirms, Pompeii’s transient and resident populations inscribe a variety of memory traces on to their external environment in much the same way as the method of *loci* requires a variety of images (*res* or *verba*) to be arranged on to a sequence of specific places. While the *ars memorativa* is intended purely as a conceptual strategy restricted to the mind, the correlation between the exemplary list of places included in the mnemonic method and the locations in which graffiti have been recorded at Pompeii is instructive. As we have seen, the places chosen by graffitists to make their mark, drawn from those sites in which graffiti cluster in large numbers (50 and over), or a sample of those in smaller groupings (10–49), indicates that passers-by, visitors and inhabitants of these public and private spaces would encounter a plethora of painted, marked and incised memory traces as they moved past, into, and through any particular location. The instruction to ancient students of rhetoric to select representative (i.e. memorable and memorisable) places like the rooms of a house, a columned area or a monumental passageway, resonates suggestively with the locations in and on which graffiti are distributed in significant numbers:

domestic spaces, courtyards and covered walks, and approaches and points of access to a variety of built spaces.

GRAFFITI CLUSTERS

As a way of illustrating the manner in which I believe ephemeral inscriptions at Pompeii conform in terms of spatial density and expression with the art of memory, I offer for consideration the following case studies of graffiti: (a) inscribed in a variety of small, medium and large social spaces across excavated Pompeii, (b) visible, legible and memorable to a broad cross-section of the city's oral-literate social strata, and (c) conforming in content, form and location to the categories of memory adduced as the M-types of skills, facts and experiences. I begin with a selection of graffiti found in clusters numbering fifty or more (I.7.1, 20; I.10.4; V.2.i; V.5.3; IX.5.18–21), then move on to smaller groupings of less than fifty (I.6.4; I.10.3; III.4.1; VI.2.9–10; VII.9.67–68; VIII.7.20. See Figure 1.2 for locations).

1. On either side of the entrance to the house identified as I.7.1, 20 (*Casa di Paqui Proculo*),²² in the *vestibulum*, and on the south wall of the peristyle is a cluster of graffiti, part of a larger corpus of 85 inscriptions, relating to Neronian Rome (CIL 4.8064–8, 8075, 8078a, 8092, 8095).²³ These graffiti conform to the text-types of single name, salutation, dedication and date statement. There are four single names, a name with an associated profession, and a name struck through. There are also two date statements, one incorporating a salutation. These graffiti refer to an *a rationibus* named Cucuta; to an emperor, the city of Rome and nationhood (Neronis, Roma, Romanus); and possibly to Nero's quinquennial *munera* held at Naples (beginning on 30 March, 60 CE). As a cluster, related by content and form, and by location (at or near the primary and secondary entrances to the house), these graffiti commit to individual and collective memory representations of important personal experiences of civic identity, social status and cultural affiliation.

2. A large number of graffiti has been recorded in House I.10.4 (*Casa di Menandro*). Of these, I draw attention to three interesting clusters:

(a) At the entrance, and on three columns in the north row of the peristyle, are graffiti relating to civic leadership and community recognition (CIL 4. 7341–3, 8319, 8320g, 8324, 8325a).²⁴ There are three single names, two in one inscription. Other names are mentioned in two commemorative dedications and three congratulations (or possibly references to a divine abstraction) of the *feliciter* type. We are familiar with the names of Infantio, a *scriptor* frequently attested in Pompeian dipinti and graffiti, N. Popidius Rufus, member of Pompeii's *ordo decurionum*, M. Hirrius Fronto Neratius Pansa, consular legate of Cappadocia and Galatia in 78/9–79/80, not to mention extreme celebrities like Cleopatra, Tiberius Augustus and,

implicitly, Nero. As Mouritsen (forthcoming) notes, these inscriptions are linked by contextual distribution to individuals waiting to enter and be received in the public spaces of the *domus*. As a cluster, they speak to experiences of *dignitas*, reciprocity of service, the importance of communal solidarity, mutual respect and the chain of governance in Roman society.

(b) In the *vestibulum*, on a single column in the peristyle's north row, and in one of the house's private spaces, we find graffiti relating to commercial interests (CIL 4.8310, 8312, 8322k, 8323, 8327/8c, 8357b).²⁵ Five bill statements and an item of information address money matters on two levels: in the contractual language of the documents of Iucundus, the Sulpicii, and the *tabulae Herculanenses*; and the transactional terms of commonplace business dealings. Connected spatially (with the exception of the household notice 8357b) and substantively, these graffiti identify experiences of service and obligation within a mixed barter-market economy.

(c) At the entrance, in the *vestibulum*, around the peristyle, and in two private spaces are graffiti inscribed by persons displaying a level of scribal literacy (CIL 4.8292, 8297, 8311, 8321, 8338–9, 8350, 8356).²⁶ Allusions to epic and lyric poetry, fragments of epistolary writing and crafted conversational idiom, a ludic inscription of the 'magic-square' type, and iteration of the name of the eponymous Greek comic whose seated image is painted nearby reflect the experience of degrees of literary culture possessed by a number of visitors to the *domus* and, likely in two cases, its resident servile population.

3. In the atrium, on four columns of the peristyle, and in the so-called *exedra* directly to the south of the peristyle in V.2.i (*Casa delle nozze d'argento*) are a number of erotic inscriptions with distinctly defamatory contents addressed to named individuals (Figure 9.1).²⁷ Potential readers of these inscriptions, with the ability to recognise terms of character derogation regularly encountered in graffiti of this kind (*fellator*, *cinaedus*), are able to trace the playful or derisive observations of previous visitors, clients, invited guests and, in the case of the *exedra*, possibly younger residents and their friends, as well as add a comment of their own. A cluster of verse inscriptions on the walls of the central S. space, in one instance the beginning of a familiar diatribe against the capricious nature of love, provides a resonant juxtaposition between levels of personal response to emotional experiences (CIL 4.4200).²⁸

4. Similar pathways of memory and experience can be followed in the peristyle of V.5.3 (*Casa dei Gladiatori*) and along the exterior walls of IX.5.18–21.²⁹

This pattern of relationships between spatial distribution, text-type and categories of memory, visible to the oral-literate pedestrian population of Pompeii, is also evident in smaller clusters of ephemeral inscriptions in the city. Compare the following sites: I.6.4; I.10.3; III.4.1; VI.2.9–10; VII.9.67–68; VIII.7.20 (Figure 1.2).

1. In small interior rooms to the right of the entrance, and on the walls of a larger space north-east of the atrium in I.6.4 (*Casa del Larario di Achille*

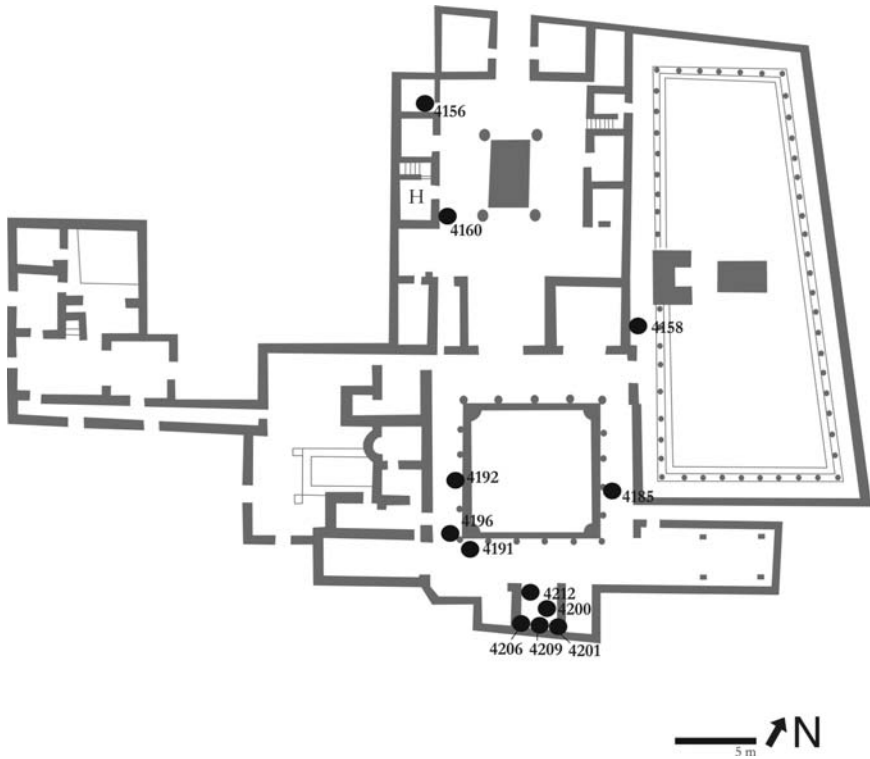


Figure 9.1 House V.2.i (*Casa delle nozze d'argento*): location of erotic, defamatory, and literary graffiti; numbers from CIL 4.

or *Casa del Sacello Iliaco*) are graffiti about aspects of *otium* and *negotium*, particularly the sources and costs of such social and economic capital (CIL 4.8013–24).³⁰ The smaller area to the southeast registers two date statements, each including reference to either the cost or amount of consumable goods, possibly wheat and the refuse from wine-pressing used as fertiliser. There would also seem to be a reference to Melicertes, the mythological son of Athamas and Ino who became the sea-god Palaemon, fleetingly alluded to in poetry of the early imperial period (Verg. *G.* 1.437; Ov. *Met.* 4.522; Pers. 5.103; Hyg. *Fab.* 1, 224.5). The larger room off the atrium provides four date statements, one indicating the date to be a personal reference to somebody's pecuniary expenditure or liability, another associated with the cost of some unidentified commodity. There is also a salutation and a single name ('VENVSTVS') inscribed in the form of a coastal trading vessel (a recognisable graffiti type in Pompeii and Rome),³¹ as well as a series of numerical marks, and another reference to Venustus, in this instance what appears to be a caption relating to a graphic representation of combat between a gladiator and a lion. Whether the exotic, or at least transmarine,

origins of the *bestiarius* Venustus are commemorated in the inscription of the distinctive ship-name cannot be confirmed. What can be said is that the 12 surviving graffiti legibly trace memories keyed to details of popular social experience, as well as to matters of quotidian economic exchange.

2. On the exterior wall of I.10.3, east of the entrance to the *Casa di Menandro*, is a vibrant, interdependent cluster of single names, congratulations, salutations, verses and items of information (*CIL* 4.8252–5, 8257–62, 8264–6, 8268–70).³² Particularly interesting is the context of this mixed dialogue. In proximity to the serving area of the nearby *caupona*, and close by two important Pompeian *domus* (I.10.3 and, across the thoroughfare to the north, I.6.15, the *Casa dei Ceii*), participants in the conversation on the wall's plastered surface, either at the beginning or end of the day's labour, or enjoying a break perhaps from other social transactions or obligations of dependence under cover from the midday heat, speak of and to each other about important civic, cultural and personal experiences: (a) a certain Sabinus and Primigenia, connected in some way to illustrations depicting trade or entertainment in the arena; (b) the *textor* Successus, whose hopeless love for a certain Iris, female slave of Cuponia, his rival Severus is diligent to clarify in painful detail; (c) possibly Successus in reply, indignant and aggressive, (d) answered in turn by Severus; (e) the unknown well-wisher, possibly a certain Modestus, offering congratulations to *Pompeiani Augusti*, the city's imperial benefactors. Here the categories of space, text-type and memory intersect to provide a *tableau* of socio-cultural experiences shared in context by composers and viewers alike.

3. In the space identified on the basis of a graffito as a *taberna vasaria*, III.4.1, inscriptions of numbers with and without words and, importantly, an *index nundinarius* speak eloquently of the regional rhythms of commerce in Pompeii and neighbouring communities (*CIL* 4.8863).³³ Incising clearly visible records of quotidian exchange and a schedule for market transactions in and around the Pompeian colony confirms the ability of the shop-owner and at least a proportion of his or her clientele to calculate in practical terms and plan for the movement and availability of necessary goods and services. Here, graffiti provide a functional extension to communal memory, reinforcing patterns of social experience in matters affecting business and the consumption of staple commodities.

4. The ease by which a viewer, literate (and numerate) at either a functional or scribal level, could detect a related pattern of text-types among the accumulation of ephemeral inscriptions in any given spatial context, and thereby interpret naturally the record of particular memory traces, can be seen in the *CIL* 4 transcription of graffiti inscribed on the exterior wall of a small house with stairway, VI.2.9–10 (*CIL* 4.1333–43a, 1345–50, 1352–65).³⁴ Here, it is important to reinforce, when considering the modern remainder of graffiti almost 2,000 years old, how legible and memorable the original marks of letters, words, statements and sketches inscribed, painted, inked or outlined in charcoal would have been to a contemporary

viewer. Like the graffito ‘eternity’ marked by Arthur Stace for inhabitants of mid-twentieth century Sydney, following a pathway of related memory traces, therefore, would not have been nearly as difficult to an individual used to doing so, especially for a participant in the ongoing process of meaning production through ephemeral inscription. Importantly, the proximity of a *castellum aquae* and drinking fountain, directly opposite the entrance to VI.2.9–10, helps to explain the number and variety of graffiti on the exterior wall. It also provides a natural context for memorialising particular aspects of individual and shared social experience in a neighbourhood of the city used to regular, diverse pedestrian traffic along the *Via Consulare* through the *Porta di Ercolano*.

5. As in the sample of selected graffiti found in larger clusters, this phenomenon can be followed in other spaces in which smaller clusters were found: for instance, the room with ramp forming the south-east corner of the building of Eumachia, identified as a *cella ostiaria*, VII.9.67–68.³⁵

6. On the north and south walls of the long, narrow corridor running from the *Via Stabia* behind the Odeon or Covered Theatre to the east entrance of the Large Theatre, VIII.7.20, *CIL* 4 records 57 graffiti. I am pleased to report from recent autopsy that a number of inscriptions remain in situ: *inter alia*, a horse, a donkey, at least two ships, an anchor, two gladiators, an ithyphallic Priapus, architectural fragments, including perhaps a tower, as well as numerical marks and a few recognisable text-types recorded in *CIL* 4. Two related clusters are pertinent in light of this discussion:

(a) A short distance from the *Via Stabia*, close to the first of the rear access points to the substructure of the small theatre’s cavea, facing each other on either wall of the corridor, are two graffiti referring to sexual and civic activities shared among companions (*CIL* 4.2440, 2450).³⁶ As interesting as the subject matter is the manner in which this content is communicated. Each graffito is inscribed according to the typology of *edicta munera edendorum*. While the nature of the social transactions recorded do not conform to the method of display, I believe that they reflect a vital aspect of oral-literate Pompeian society. The composer(s) of these ephemeral commemorations employ, with evident *ludibrium*, an epigraphic form usually found in the display of advertised public events. Epaphra, Acutus and Auctus—self-named *Geryones trimembres* in allusion to the three-bodied monster known from contemporary poetry, drama and mythography (Sen. *Her. F.* 487, *Her. O.* 1900; Verg. *Aen.* 8.202; Hyg. *Fab.* 30)—inscribe vivid, memorable records of their dealings with a certain Tyche and of their collegial relationship in pursuit of *voluptas*. By imitating a familiar, public epigraphic form and, by means of playful *variatio*, they ensure for their notices a longer than normal life as innovative memorials appreciated by the reading population that used this corridor on a regular basis.

(b) Clustered around the west exterior wall of the Covered Theatre, between the access points to *scena* and *proscenium*, dating to the second

or third quarter of the first century BCE, are the verses identified in one instance as *Tibertinus epoese* (CIL 4.4966–4973). Whether the composer of all seven inscriptions is a certain Tibertinus, resident adept of proto-neoteric culture, or one or possibly more anonymous individuals ventriloquising faithful imitations or adapted variations of verses that have not survived in the literary tradition is unclear. What is clear is that these fragments of crafted lyric poetry appear in a context purpose-built for public recitation, a space keyed to community reception of artistic performance of the classical and popular canon. As such, they provide us with another example of how Pompeian men and women absorbed and exchanged culture and language—through speech-acts like the poems of ‘Tibertinus’, inscribed to be read and to survive as memorable traces of individual skills, information and experience.

CONCLUSION

For the places are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like the *letters*, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the *script*, and the delivery is like the *reading*.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.20.3)

Small (1995: 150, 164) argues that ‘memory at its best captures gist, not verbatim fidelity. [. . .] Once we understand that the ancient standard of ‘accuracy’ is ‘gist,’ we can also understand why the ancients would so willingly rely on their memories for retrieval.’³⁷ In the same way, the autobiographical memory traces represented by clusters of ephemeral inscriptions do not provide simple connections between discrete past and present moments. Rather, by summarising, constructing, interpreting and condensing life experiences, often smoothing over the boundaries between different moments, these graffiti traces produce a coherent narrative sense of a personal past (Schechtman 1994; cf. Glover 1998; Engel 1999). It is precisely at this literal and conceptual junction that we encounter what Halbwachs ([1925] 1992: 38) called ‘social frameworks of memory’: not the simple product of isolated individual memories, constructed after the fact by combinations of separate reminiscences, but rather, in part, their source, the instruments used in particular acts of recall. As established in the first half of this chapter, large and small clusters of Pompeian graffiti—for the purposes of this discussion, labelled M-type—express skills, facts and autobiographical episodes, marked in a variety of physical contexts: the memory-traces of individual and shared knowledge and experiences that constitute, communicate and preserve various aspects of social and cultural understanding in an ancient Campanian town.

It is here that we can also identify a significant relationship between acts of graffiti practice, literacy, and the enduring mnemonic method of

loci. As Hillier and Hanson (1984: 1–2) observe, ‘space [. . .] creates the special relation between function and social meaning in buildings [. . . and] through the ways in which buildings [. . .] create and order space, we are able to recognise society.’ While at no point inferring a literal relationship between the mnemotechnology of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and graffiti practices in Pompeii, I would argue that the material traces of message—the writing and imagery painted, marked and inscribed on the visible surfaces of the urban fabric and preserved for us as *graphio inscripta*—allow modern eyes and minds to identify, connect and reconstruct facets of past lives. In much the same way as the unknown author of a rhetorical treatise on remembering speeches saw utility in associating something to be remembered with a physical object or architectural feature, so the extant remains of Pompeian graffiti, situated within their spatial contexts, help us to reconstitute social and cultural meanings known by and shared among a heterogeneous urban community.

With this in mind, let us step back from the doorways, porticoes and courtyards of the Vesuvian city and (depending on our means and desire) partake of pastry and diluted wine in one of the nearby *popinae* or relax for a while in the small garden of Euxinus’ bustling *caupona*. Perhaps take note of the frescoed *lares* painted on a wall opposite, or an enshrined phallus in relief. Amid the smells of oven and amphora, the sounds of singing and gambling, and the sights of resident and guest in this furnished place, it is possible to reflect imaginatively on the occurrence and distribution of these spatial and temporal intersections. Sacral contexts about the social activities of domestic properties and establishments for the provision of food, drink, entertainment and accommodation. Proximities of consumption, habitation and worship point to another inter-subjective network of social relations. And the memory traces of this cultural experience would appear mediated through the interactive syntax of graffiti, a visual and kinaesthetic dialogue among inhabitants and visitors along the linear through-routes and irregularly configured streets of a regional centre of late Republican and early Imperial urban life.

NOTES

1. All translations are those of the author.
2. Grahame (2000: 55) likens the principles and pathways relating to concepts of structure and contingency underlying the reading of space to Saussure’s association between language and culture: *langue*, the system of codes, rules and norms that constitute any particular language, corresponds to the rules or ‘grammars’ of built space; *parole*, the utilisation of this system by an individual speaker, corresponds to the practical consequence of built space, movement and encounter.
3. The anonymous treatise on the art of memory, *De Ratione Dicendi ad C. Herennium*, thought to have been composed in the first century BCE, will be cited throughout by its familiar title, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. On the

authorship, dating, and subject matter associated with the work of the Auctor *ad Herennium*, see Small 1997: 98–115.

4. The author acknowledges that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is a practical discussion designed to help orators, not an abstract treatise consisting of gnomic utterances on the nature of memory. I use short, decontextualised excerpts from it as a linking device and a reminder of the instrumental quality of remembering in ancient experience. For synthetic treatments of surviving references in Latin and Greek to the mechanics of *ars memorativa*, see, e.g. Yates 1966: 1–49; Blum 1969 and Rubin 1995: 46–8.
5. In sign-posting the usefulness of Pompeian graffiti as an index of literacy and culture, I consider the spatial and temporal location of the source material as fundamental. In this regard, I see the need for quantitative analysis, but as a tool for interpretation rather than an end in itself. Any statistical treatment that follows will therefore be explanatory rather than exhaustive.
6. Categories of painted, marked and informally incised inscriptions in *CIL* 4 (the Latin of the editors is translated into English, in square brackets, followed by the original *CIL* 4 items, and then any later corrections and additions in parentheses; see further Table 9.1): (1) *programmata antiquissima* [oldest electoral notices]—*CIL* 4.1–83, 3341–54, 7116–27, 9822–7; (2) *tituli pictae recentiores* [more recent painted notices]: *CIL* 4.84–1175c, 3355–3879, 7128–7984, 9828–9961a (corrections and additions: 2881–3296, 6601–92, 7008–15, 7022–54); (3) *edicta munerum edendorum* [announcements of publicly displayed games]: *CIL* 4.1177–1204, 3881–4, 7985–96, 9962–86; (4) *graphio inscripta* [inscribed with a graphium]: *CIL* 4.1205–2512, 3885–5439, 7997–9184, 9185–9262b (corrections and additions: 3297–3339, 7016–21, 7055–7107, 9987–10249); (5) *alphabetum* [alphabets]: *CIL* 4.2514–49c, 5452–5506, 9263–9312a (corrections and additions: 6904–10, 10250–9a); (6) *quadratariorum notae* [stonemasons' marks]: *CIL* 4.2550.1–54, 5507.1–178, 5508.1–32, 5509.1–40, 10260.1–30 (corrections and additions: 5507.179–89, 5508.33, 5509.41–44); (7) *vasa fictilia* [earthenware containers]: (a) *consules* [consular names]: *CIL* 4.2551–61, 5510–34, 9313–18 (corrections and additions: 10261); (b) *vina, garum, liquamen, mel, aliaque* [contents]: *CIL* 4.2562–2625, 5535–5763, 9319–9455 (corrections and additions: 6911–13, 10262–10312); (c) *nomina* [names]: *CIL* 4.2626–2740, 5764–5929, 9456–9625 (corrections and additions: 6914–28, 10313–103); (d) *litterae incertae significationis* [numerals, single letters, marks of uncertain meaning]: *CIL* 4.2741–75, 5930–6243, 9626–76 (corrections and additions: 6929–67, 10375–91a); (e) *graphio exarata* [scratched with a graphium]: *CIL* 4.2776–2813, 6244–74, 9677–9700 (corrections and additions: 6968–71, 10392–7); (f) *Graeca* [Greek]: *CIL* 4.2814–80, 6275–6600, 9701–9821 (corrections and additions: 6975–7007, 10398–10477); (8) *tabulae ceratae* [wax tablets]: *CIL* 4.3340.1–155; Camodeca 1999: 1–127.
7. Between 24 February and 31 April 1841, Francesco Maria Avellino supervised the excision of 19 wall panels from the northern interior wall of the Basilica. These panels were enclosed in wooden frames and transported to the Archaeological Museum in Naples, where they are presently stored (though not displayed in the main collection).
8. *CIL* 4.1837 (Add. pp. 212, 464, 704); *CLE* 949 (preserved on the wall panel numbered 5, in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli): *si potes et non vis cur gaudia | differs spemque foves et | cras usque redire iubes? [Er]lgo coge mori quem | sine te vivere coges. | Munus erit certe non cruciasset boni. Quod spes | eripuit, spes certe reddi<i>t amanti. | Qui hoc leget nunc quam p[osteac] | aled legat nunquam sit salvos qui supra scripsit | vere dicis Hedysto*

l'feliciter. For poetic parallels in the first five lines: (a) *gaudia differs*: Ov. *Am.* 3.6.87, 2.5.29; *Her.* 18.3; *Met.* 4.350, 6.514; (b) *munus erit*: Ov. *Met.* 9.181; *Tr.* 1.2.52; (c) ll. 2, 3: Tib. 2.6.17f; Verg. *Ecl.* 2.7; (d) ll. 4, 5: Ov. *Her.* 3.140. Zangemeister attributes ll. 1–8 to a single *scriptor*; Mommsen sees a different hand at work in ll. 6–8. In order, then, they read a second (third), third (fourth), and fourth (fifth) *scriptor* as responsible, respectively, for ll.9–10 (*qui hoc leget . . . nunquam sit salvos*), the latter section of l.10 (*qui supra scripsit*), the bulk of l.11 (*vere dicis*), and the remainder, ll.11–12 (*Hedysto feliciter*). Bibliography: Varone 2002: 104, n. 163. Numbers in the body of the text indicate different hands, not presumed order of marking.

9. This graffito is now conserved in the storerooms of the Museo Nazionale di Napoli. It is also reproduced as a line drawing in the first volume of *CIL* 4.
10. This 'protocol of injunctions' is discussed in more detail below, in relation to the mnemonic method of *loci*.
11. For example, inscribed in the black border of the same section of wall that displays the preceding conversation, is the following exchange (*CIL* 4.1839): *Agat[h]o Herenni serv[u]s rogat Venere[m] | ut periat rogo | . . . vita* (*scriptor* 1: 'Agatho, slave of Herennius, prays to Venus: . . . life'; *scriptor* 2, interposed: 'I pray that he perishes'). See also Benefiel, page 14–15.
12. For a case-study of a defined sample of graffiti at Pompeii (VII.7.2, 4–5, 14–15), see Franklin 1991: 92–7.
13. Graffiti clusters of 11–20: *regio* I.2.6, 4.5, 6.2, 6.4, 7.7, 7.19, 8.17, 9.5–7, 10.2, 10.7, 10.8, 13.3 (12); *regio* II.3.10, 6.a, 7.6, 7.7, 7.10 (5); *regio* III.2.1, 4.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1 (5); *regio* V.1.23, 26, 2.19, 2.15, 3.10, 4.1, 4.11, 5.1 (7); *regio* VI.14.20, 14.40, 15.1, 15.5, 15.6 (5); *regio* VII.6.7, 6.28, 6.38, 12.31, 15.12 (5); *regio* VIII.2.20, 3.8 (2); *regio* IX.1.20, 2.17, 3.5, 5.6. Graffiti clusters of 21–30: *regio* I.2.19–20, 3.3, 6.15, 10.11 (4); *regio* II.2.5, 4.10 (2); *regio* III.7.1 (1); *regio* V.1.18, 2.4 (2); *regio* VI.11.14 (1); *regio* VII.1.40, 10.35 (2); *regio* VIII.2, 36, 37, 7 (2); *regio* IX.8.12 (1).
14. (1) *dipinti*—e.g. *CIL* 4.787 (electoral notice); 1190 (announcement of games); 1136 (advertisement of rental space) (2) *graffiti*—e.g. *CIL* 4.1824 (love); 7796 (religion); 3726 (imperial family); (3) formal inscriptions—e.g. *CIL* 10.800 (award of public contract); 846 (declaration of temple reconstruction); 1063 (provision of private bath facilities).
15. *CIL* 4.10640 (Herculaneum); *AE* 1997: 1068 (Narbonne).
16. *CIL* 4.1227 (Add. p. 205, 463, 704; pl. 13.6); *CLE* 928: *Venimus | huc cupidi | multo | magis | hire <cupimus> ut | liceat | nostros | visere | Roma lares*, *CIL* 4.2995 (Add. p. 704; pl. 48.23): [*Venim*]us hoc cupi[di] multo magis ire cupimus; 6697: *Venimus hoc cupidi multo magis | ire cupimus*; 8114: [*Venimus huc*] cupidi multo magis | [ire] cupimus; 8231: *Venimus h huc cupidi multo magis ire cu[pi]mus || venimus*; 8891: *venimus hoc cupidi scribitt cornelius martialis*; 10065a: *Venimus hoc cupidi multo magis*; Solin 1975: 264 no. 17: *venimus hoc cupidi multo magis*; Solin 1975: 266, no. 57 (fig. 241): *venimus h[oc] c[upidi] multo magis ire cupimus | set retinet nostros illa puella pedes*. For the instances outside Pompeii, see *CIL* 4.10640 (Herculaneum: *Ins. Orientalis* I): *venimus | venimus | hoc cupidi | multo magis ire cupimus*; and *AE* 1997: 1068 (Narbonne): [*Venimus hoc cupi*]di multo magis ire cupimus. Additional bibliography: Varone 2002: 56, n. 70. On this couplet's relation to popular literary culture, see Benefiel (forthcoming).
17. Rubin (1995): social language (65, 66); structured language (69, 70); retention and retelling (123–30); distribution across generations (130–36).
18. Digital texts of data relating to Latin abbreviations (published in *AE* 1888–1993) are available from Clauss 2009 and the common and complete abbreviation lists compiled for the ASGLE web site by Elliot 1998.

19. Solin 1970: 13 considers this essential difference between lapidary inscriptions and graffiti in relation to the correct interpretation of any epigraphic text.
20. See Connerton (1989: 102): 'Incorporating practices therefore provide a particularly effective system of mnemonics. [. . .] For it is true that whatever is written, and more generally, whatever is inscribed, demonstrates by the fact of being inscribed, a will to be remembered'.
21. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.33.2: *Duplices igitur similitudines esse debent, unae rerum, alterae verborum*. The instruction continues (3.33.3): 'analogies for *things* are portrayed when in a general way we connect or equate images with the same things; analogies for *words* are established when every single name and designation is indicated by memory with an image'. According to Cicero (*Inv. rhet.* 1.7.9), things are the *content* of a speech and words are the *language* in which that content is represented.
22. All locations in Pompeii conform to a system of numbering linked to three specific spatial markers: one of nine large urban regions (*regio*); smaller blocks of built spaces within each region (*insulae*)—homes, shops, industrial or artisanal areas; and main entrances or doorways to individual spaces. In the present instance, the home is located in *regio* I, insula 7, doorways 1 and 20. Many sites in Pompeii have been identified also by the hypothetical owner; here the Italian form for House of Paquius Proculus. All sites in this article will be identified by numerical system and Italian name where commonly applied.
23. CIL 4.8064: *Ner(onis) | Neroni(s) Ne(ronis)*. 8065: *Cucuta*. 8066: *Cu(cuta) | Cucuta Ner(onis)*. 8067/8: *Rom Roma Romanus*. 8075: *Cucuta ab ra[t]ioni[b]us | Neronis Augusti*. 8078a: *nonis Neronis* (sc. *Aprilibus*) *sal(utem)*. 8092: *Ol(ympica) III K(alendas) Ner(onias)* (sc. *Apriles*). 8095: *Neronis*.
24. CIL 4.7341: *L. Octavi[o] | felice[r]*. 7342: *Defensoribus coloniae felic[iter]*. 7343: *Popidio Rufo feliciter dignus est omnibus Pompeianis feliciter scripsit Infantio*. 8319: *cum Tegaete | commilitones | gentis Rust[iae]*. 8320g: *Tib(erius) Aug(usti)*. 8324: *Neratius | Pansa | Cleopatra*. 8325a: *eu sebasta* (sc. *Augustalibus feliciter*).
25. CIL 4.8310: *ex me[n]sa* (sc. *argentaria*) *m[illia] . . . h[s] (sumpta) | quam pecuniam Quintus (Poppaeus Sabinus) | Cn. | Pontio [S]ilano (?) s. (?) | locavit*. 8312: figures of four shoes *a(ssibus) IIII s(emis)*. 8322k: *Somene nequ(ami)*; cf. 5123: *Somene dupu[n]diu[m] XI loc(at?)*. 8323: *Euplous* (three times) $\times$ *CIC* (a hundred thousand denarii). 8327/8c: *C. M. Arestion | rescinde fundi (tabulas)*. 8357b: *a(ssibus) X Icari*.
26. CIL 4.8292: *vidistiquo tuanus equo q* (Verg. *Aen.* 9.269); cf. 1237 [VI.1.24 (exterior wall, left of door, in rough square letters between lines): *mystes communi suo salute vidisti quo turnum aequoribus eibat in arm[is] | virtutis merces palmam pretium gloriae victoriae spem causas*]. 8297: *Roma-olim-Milo-amor*. 8311: *uis ceras* (i.e. *epistolam*); cf. 1796 with Add. p. 464, Basilica (N. wall, between the 11th and 12th column, in yellow-grey): *[am]plexus teneros hac si] quis quaerit in u[rbe] | expect [at ceras] nulla pu[e?]lla viri*. 8321: *Chloe Eutychia et | non me curas Eutylichia spe(s) [f]irma | tua Ruf(um?) amas*. | *Cal(v)us | Cl(a)ri (servus?)*. 8338: *Menander*; cf. 7350: (a) *Menander*; (b) *Menander | hic primus | om[ni]u[m] comolediam scripsit | [Trig?]emino | rum XII | Lib[er]*. 8339: (*Solus erat semper, sic*) *molis | solus ubique, | (ipsa) domusque dies | non erat usque | dies*. 8350: *duxi | chorum*; cf. 8392 [I.10.11 (on black plaster of left wall of *vestibulum*): *accipe quos dedi tecum choros*]. 8356: *Nucerea* (for *Nuceriae*) *quaeres ad Porta(m) Romana(m), | in vico Venerio, Novelliam | Primigeniam*.
27. CIL 4.4156: *Lucio Albucio felato*. 4158: *Pyris felas | Apyristei*. 4160: a phallus plus *casti[-]i*. 4185: *Sabina | fel[l]as | no(n) belle fac[i]s*. 4192: *Ecidia*

- fellatrix*. 4196: *Miduse fututrix*. 4201: *Iulius ci[n]a | edus*. 4206: *Helena cinauetus (cinaedus? cina(ede) uetus?)*. 4209: *fellator*.
28. CIL 4.4200: *quisquis amat veniat veneri lumbos uo . . .*; cf. 1824: *quisquis amat veniat* [or, *veneat*] *veneri volo frangere costas | fustibus et lumbos debilitare deae | si potest [= potis] illa mihi tenerum pertundere pectus | quit* [or, *qur*, *quid*] *ego non possim caput illae [= illi] frangere fuste* [or, *fusti*]. 4207: *esurit Dan(a)e | ego sum a(ureus)*. 4212: *conticu . . .*; cf. 4191 (peristyle column, SW corner: *contiquere | omnes*; Verg. *Aen.* 2.1).
29. V.5.3: CIL 4.4289: *puerarum | decus Celadus*. 4290: *tr(aex) [Celadus]*. 4297: *Celadus Oct III ⊃ III*. 4298: *Florus* plus picture of a deer. 4299: V. K. Aug. *Nuceriae Florus vic(it)*, | *XIIX K. Sept. Herclanio vicit*. 4341: *tr(aex) | Celadus*. 4342: *suspirium puellarum | tr(aex) | Celadus | Oct. III ⊃ III*. 4345: *puellarum decus | tr(aex) Celadus*. 4353: *Cresce[n]s retia(r)ius | puparum nocturnarum mat [. . .] ar [. . .] aliarum | ser[.]atinus [. . .] medicus*. 4356: *tr(aex) | Celadus reti(arius) | Cresces | puparru[m] domnus*. 4378: *Felix Cassii XIII ⊃ XIII | Frorus O(--c(--e XIV ⊃ XIV*. 4387: *Florus m(issus)*. 4397: *suspirium | puellarum | Celadus tr(aex)*. IX.5.18–21: 5117, 5130, 5131, 5137, 5150, 5153: *Successa*.
30. CIL 4.8013: *idibus Martia | in sumptum sumpsi*. 8014: *XI XV Ka(lendas) Maias*. 8015: *VII idus novem asseser IIII | tertius*. 8016: *XI K(alendas) Iulias | man (?)*. 8017: *Venustus i s [.] fu [--] in [--] Vibrio (?) lione*. 8018: *IIIIIIIIII* (ten times) *X Sex*. 8019: *III idus Iulias tr(itici?) m(odios?) CC*. 8020: ship-name [*Venustus*]. 8021: *ferreolus antho | sa*. 8022: *VII K(alendas) Iul(ias) | vinacia | venit [assibus] XXXII*. 8023: *melicertes*. 8024: *auctus*.
31. Pompeii : CIL 4.1764; 4225; 4755; 5428; 8792; 8991; 9039. Rome: Della Corte 1933: 116, no. 75; Castrén and Lilius 1970: 119, no. 19.
32. CIL 4.8252: *Modestus Modes(tus)*. 8253: *Pomp(eianis) Aug(ustis) [feliciter]*; cf. 6764. 8254: [*Prim?*] *illa v(ale)*. 8255: *Lindorus? Lindore s(alve)?* 8257: *speraturi?* | *Minucius?* 8259 (I. Severus, to Successus): *Successus textor amat coponiaes ancilla(m), | nomine Hiredem, quae quidem illum | non curat, sed ille rogat, illa com[m]iseretur*. | *Scribit rivalis*. Vale. | (II. Successus, reply to Severus) *Invidiose, quia rumeperes, sedare noli formonsiorem, || et qui est homo praeuessimus et bellus*. 8258 (III. Severus, reply to Successus): *dixi, scripsi*. *Amas Hiredem, | qua<e> [t]e non curat. s[u]a Successo ut s[u]pr[a] [--]s[--]*. Severus. 8260: *Sabinus cum Primigenia*. 8261: *Chr<a>esime olpilius (ob filias?) saletos facere*. 8262: *Succ(essus)*. 8264: *Sabinus*. 8265: *Cerr(inus)*. 8266: *Lucret(ius)* plus man looking out, two gladiators fighting, ship. 8268: *LXXII CII*. 8269: *Amiculus*. 8270: *prima sec(u)do salute(m)* *Plurima* plus gladiator facing right, ship with sailor and captain facing right, four boards, three birds, wooden ladder.
33. CIL 4.8863: column 1: *dies—Sat(urni), Sol(is), Lun(ae), Mar(tis), Mer(curi), Iou(is), Ven(eri)s*. Column 2: *nundinae—Pompeis, Nuceria, Atilla, Nola, Cumis, Putiolos, Roma, Capua*. Columns 3–5: list of months and days from 13 (?) October to 12 November. Columns 6–8: I–XXX.
34. CIL 4.1333: *Bilius*. 1333a: *Iun(iae) Primae*. 1334: *verna Vernionis | Secundus | Secundus*. 1335: *Antonius Rustio s(alutem)*. 1336: *Phospor tuis | choreis*. 1337: *Phospor tuis c[h]ore[i]s*. 1338: *Restituta tuis choreis*. 1339: *memor*. 1339a: *Accia*. 1340: *Iulius Quintus*. 1341: *Restituta tuis chore[is]*. 1342: *ueteri*. 1343: *Quintinus*. 1343a: *tecum | pia*. 1345: *Severus | Severus*. 1346: *C. Vinif*. 1347: *felices homines va(le) | felices*. 1348: *Sabinus | de quinq(ue)*. 1349: *Pompeianus*. 1350: *Pompeianus*. 1352: *Successus*. 1352a: *mil. mod.* 1352b: *Elene*. 1352c: *Nyptae | [Va]tile*. 1353: *cum Lub*. 1353a: *quibus nomini*. 1353b: *Anti[---] et Successus Amphia[rtes?]* 1353c: *tuis | cum*. 1353d: *commun[---]*. 1354: *bonum Faustum Felix*. 1355: *Successtus*.

- 1356: *Primigeni felix et* [-----]. 1357: *Primigni es Felex*. 1358: *rixa*. 1359: *Vestalis*. 1360: *Kinnamos*. 1361: *Xantus*. 1362: *Psyce*. 1363b: *Ampliatu* | *Marcus*. 1363c: *Myrtale*. 1364. *Nomina Nychi* | *genice* | *Th[-]e[-]ice* | *Dotice Patagrica* | *Onomastice Onogrica* | *Phyrrice* | *Byxantice* | *Cretice* | *Dymastice* | *Gymnice* | *Chizecae*. 1365: *Hermes* | *Hostis* | *Bena*.
35. CIL 4.9062: IX K(alendas) Maias | Meroe sum(p)sit. 9063: XIII K(alendas) Iulias I. 9064: L. Aem(il . . . ?) | V Id(us) No(vembres) p. 9065: scri(bit? psit?) | numerals | nomen? | numerals. 9066: numerals and measures. 9067: pon(do). 9068: pr(idie) edus Ap(riles). 9069–70: numerals and measures. 9071: XI K(alendas) Apr(iles). 9072: numerals. 9073: XXVII s(emis) | allia | Numulus | puer | XV K(alendas) Iulia[s].
36. CIL 4.2440: a(nte) d(iem) XI K(alendas) Dec(embres) Geryones | trimembres aerus senos | comperendinarunt. 2450: a(nte) d(iem) XI K(alendas) Decembr(es) | Epapra Acutus Auctus | ad locum duxserunt | mulierem Tychen pretium | in singulos a(sses) V f(uit) M(arco) Messalla L(ucio) Lentulo co(n)s(ulibus) | // a(sses) XV.
37. Compare Thucydides 1.22; Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.2–3.1451b. See also Baddeley 1997: 138–9.

10 Graffiti in Aphrodisias

Images—Texts—Contexts

Angelos Chaniotis

INTRODUCTION

From the late first century BCE to the seventh century CE, the city of Aphroditē was one of the most important urban centres in Asia Minor.¹ The city on the river Morsynos owed its name and its fame to the sanctuary of an old Anatolian goddess of fertility and war, who was later identified with the Greek Aphroditē. During the wars of the Late Republic the Aphrodisians were fortunate enough they have chosen the right allies among the Romans. As trustworthy allies they received a series of political and economic privileges that made Aphrodisias a prosperous city and at least in theory an independent community. From the late first century onwards an extensive building program filled the city with beautiful buildings, which still impress the modern visitor; among them the temple of Aphroditē and the impressive gate of the sacred precinct (Tetrapylon), a theatre, two market places surrounded by richly decorated porticos, the bouleuterion (town-hall), a building complex dedicated to the cult of the emperors (Sebasteion) and the stadium (Figure 10.1). Imperial support, the exploitation of a fertile territory and of marble quarries, and the famous local school of sculptors made the city of Aphroditē a prosperous urban centre. Sometime before the end of the third century CE, Aphrodisias became capital of the province of Karia, and both the governor and wealthy citizens donated new buildings or restored the old ones.

The modern visitor to ancient cities, especially to those that have been carefully excavated and restored, is impressed by the shining marble buildings and tends to forget the everyday problems of these places: dirtiness, ruined or damaged constructions, deficient water supply, unattended canalisation. The cities were inhabited by people, who lived and loved, quarrelled, hated, fell in love, and not unlike us, filled the walls of the public and private buildings, the columns, the pavements, and the seats of theatres and stadia with drawings, with their names and with short texts. Many of them were written with charcoal (Lucian, *Dial. meret.* 10.4) and have not survived. As long as they were visible, however, they were an important feature of the urban image, so strongly attracting the interest of passers-by



Figure 10.1 Plan of Aphrodisias. Courtesy of Aphrodisias Excavations, New York University.

that Plutarch advised his readers not to bother about them and instead to turn their interest to more important things (*Mor.* 520 d–e): ‘Nothing useful or pleasant is written on the walls; simply that so-and-so commemorates so-and-so wishing him well (*emnēsthē ep’ agathōi*) or that another one is the best of friends (*philōn aristos*)’.

Hundreds of images and texts scratched and chiselled on the steps of the theatre, the stadium and the bouleuterion, on the columns and walls of public buildings, and on the pavement of the streets, have been found in Aphrodisias—more than in most other cities of the Roman East (for Dura, see Baird, this volume).² The Aphrodisian graffiti range from obscene images to prayers, from elaborated acclamations to simple names, from declarations of friendship to drawings of faces, and from the representation of entertainers to religious symbols. Some of the pictorial graffiti are of high quality.

For instance, a bust engraved on a seat of the theatre (Roueché 1993: 112 no. 46.J.8 and pl. XVI; Langner 2001: no. 326) has a close resemblance to the representation of human figures in Late Antique metal objects and glass vases.³ The manner in which this face has been chiselled with a fine tool suggests that its maker was a craftsman, possibly with experience in metalworking. Indeed, next to the image there is a graffito, which suggests that text and image are connected with a guild of goldsmiths ('the fortune of Theodotos, first goldsmith, prevails!'). I can find no other explanation for the great number, variety and sometimes quality of the Aphrodisian graffiti than the fact that a substantial part of the population (including members of the elite) were involved in the carving of stone, as sculptors and masons. Unlike graffiti, which were scratched with a pointed instrument on a plaster wall or painted (for a few examples in Aphrodisias see Roueché 1989: nos. 61, 75–8, and 218), some of the Aphrodisian graffiti required the use of chisels or other tools. I assume that such graffiti were primarily made by craftsmen, who visited public spaces equipped with implements of their work. As Taylor also argues in this volume, the observation that the carving of graffiti on stone requires implements and a certain skill is of course of significance for their interpretation. Unlike graffiti on wall plaster, which could have been scratched by children (Huntley, this volume) or women (Benefiel, this volume; Lucian, *Dial. meret.* 10.4), most graffiti on stone seem to reflect the thoughts and emotions of men.

DEFINITIONS

Pictorial graffiti, according to Martin Langner's useful definition (2001: 12) are images engraved on a space that did not primarily serve this function ('jede Ritzzeichnung an einem scheinbar beliebigen, dafür primär nicht vorgesehenen Ort'). In order to define textual graffiti we should also primarily consider the spatial context, leaving aside classificatory principles which place emphasis on the content of the text, the manner in which it has been written, or questions of authorisation. Under certain conditions, a text of any content can be a graffito.

Let me provide a few examples. The acclamation *tychēi agathēi* ('for good fortune') appears in a variety of contexts: decrees, treaties, dedications, honorary inscriptions, mosaics, etc. Whether it will be regarded as a graffito does not depend on whether this acclamation appears in a formal, official or authorised context or whether it has been neatly executed, but on whether it has been engraved on a bearer destined or expected to fulfil this specific function as a bearer of a text. For instance, when this acclamation appears on a stele as the heading of a decree, on a statue base as part of an honorary inscription, on an architrave as part of a building inscription, on a pedestal as part of a dedication or in a mosaic floor, it certainly is not a graffito. But exactly the same text is a graffito when it is engraved on an

object, whose primary function did not include the writing of texts (or of such texts), for example, on a column, a rock, a seat of a theatre, a wall of a house or a plaque of a pavement. It is then secondary whether it has been elegantly executed and engraved with the consent of the proprietor of the physical object. Another example: a label on a vase made by the artist in order to explain a representation is not a graffito; but a label scratched on a vase by a later user is (see Volioti, this volume). An account is a graffito when it is scratched on the wall of a house (e.g. *SEG* 55.1172), but not when it appears on a piece of papyrus, an ostrakon or a wax tablet.

Graffiti are always of unofficial character—an ‘official graffito’ would be a contradiction in terms—but to regard all graffiti products of spontaneity is a big mistake, as Lucian teaches us. In one of his courtesan’s dialogues (10.4), Drosis discusses with Chelidonion possible strategies to be used against the philosopher Aristainetos, who was preventing Drosis’ lover, Kleinias, from visiting her. Chelidonion volunteers to help in a slander campaign: ‘I think that I will write on the wall in Kerameikos ‘Aristainetos is corrupting Kleinias’. When Drosis wonders, how Chelidonion can do this without being seen, her friend responds: ‘By night, Drosis, taking charcoal from somewhere’. Not much spontaneity, here, but certainly a lot of emotionality (for another interpretation of this passage see Zadorojnyi page 113).

Some graffiti can be very elegant, exactly as some official or formal inscriptions (e.g. boundary stones and epitaphs) can be executed in a very crude manner. A more thorny issue is that of authorisation. Modern graffiti are (usually) made without the consent of the individual or institution that owns or controls the physical object on which the images and texts have been engraved. As we may infer from an Ostia graffito (*pygizō pantas tous epitoichographous* ‘I fuck all those who write on walls’; Rea 1979) ancient graffiti and dipinti may have caused some annoyance to house owners (cf. Langner 2001: 21). But if we were to strictly apply this criterion of consent or lack thereof to the ancient material, then we would be obliged to exclude from the study of ancient graffiti a whole lot of texts and images, which were certainly not inscribed secretly or against the will of the owner of the physical object—in fact they were often made by the owner himself. Many of the graffiti on the walls of houses in Ephesos and Zeugma were made by owners, inhabitants or guests (Taeuber 2005; Barbet 2005: 180–7). We naturally regard as graffiti owner’s inscriptions, dedications and playful verses scratched on vases after firing; seating inscriptions in theatres and stadia are labelled as graffiti, as are *proskynemata* engraved on rocks or walls of sanctuaries in Egypt by visitors as part of a ritualised commemoration of their visit (Mairs in this volume). Authorisation or lack thereof seems too restrictive a criterion for the definition of graffiti in antiquity. There is, of course, a grey zone of uncertainty. A text on a wooden tablet or a stone plaque that identifies the owner of a shop (Rubensohn 1900) is not a graffito. What are we to do, however, with a place inscription on the

column of a portico in a public space (e.g. Roueché 1989: no. 191, ‘this is the place of the barber Alexandros’), which contests the use of public space, or an inscription on the wall of a chamber of a theatre, which identifies the actor, who temporarily used it as his dressing room (Roueché 1993, 15–21)? Because of the unofficial and temporary nature of such texts and



Figure 10.2 Graffito near the Karlstor in Heidelberg, 29 July 2006. Photo by author.

their parasitical appearance on public buildings, in my view they can still be counted among the graffiti.

According to this tentative definition, graffiti are images or texts of unofficial character scratched on physical objects, whose primary function was not to serve as bearers of such images and inscriptions. Graffiti have great affinity to painted texts and images that share these characteristics.

CONTEXTS

Graffiti acquire meaning only when they can be placed in contexts. If under favourable light conditions one can recognize the roughly but competently engraved face of a man on a column of a Late Antique house in Aphrodisias (Figure 10.5a, page 201), one may be able to date it, given the archaeological context and the style; one would observe the similarity to analogous images in glass vases of the fourth or fifth century CE, but one would not be able to understand the context. Even when images are accompanied by texts the contexts usually remain elusive. The aforementioned bust of a woman on a seat in the theatre of Aphrodisias appears next to an inscription: ‘the fortune of Theodotos, first goldsmith, prevails!’ Were image and text made by the same individual? Is the image an allusion to Theodotos’ craftsmanship? Was the text written by the proud Theodotos, by a good friend or a subordinate, who wanted to flatter him?

A graffito, which I photographed in Heidelberg on 29 July 2006 epitomises some of the aspects that I shall treat in this chapter (Figure 10.2). It shows an ‘icon’, which in combination with the text ‘Mannheim City’ (not ‘Mannheim Stadt’) alludes to a certain culture or subculture, and therefore to a particular identity. This graffito glorifies the pop-culture of Mannheim, but it was made in Heidelberg, the neighbouring city and traditional competitor of Mannheim. Later, someone added the word ‘gay’, leaving us to wonder whether this is an ironical comment, an insult, expression of homophobia, or a declaration of its author’s personal sexual preferences (similar questions can be asked about the ‘erotic’ graffiti discussed by Taylor, this volume). Only the author and his direct audience know the answer. Exactly these aspects—identity, competition, insult and performance—will be the focus of my analysis of some graffiti in Aphrodisias. Graffiti are usually the products of instantaneous situations. This is why they are so hard to interpret, but this is why they are so valuable as records of voices and emotions on stone.

The key to understanding graffiti is the study of their context. The oldest Greek textual graffiti is the so-called Nestor’s cup from Ischia.⁴ It was found in 1953 in Pithekoussai opposite Cumae, the oldest Greek colony in the West. It is a hexametrical text incised after firing on a clay vase. The restoration of the text’s first line (‘this is the cup of Nestor’ or ‘Nestor had a cup?’) is subject of an unresolved controversy. According to the

interpretation which I favour, the graffito makes a contrast between the famous cup of Nestor in the *Iliad* and this particular cup (Manganaro 1995: *Nestoros e[n to]i eupot[on] poterion*; cf. Lombardi 2003). The text should then be translated as follows:

Nestor had a drinking cup, from which it was pleasant to drink. Whoever drinks from this cup, here, will be momentarily seized by desire for Aphrodite, the one with beautiful garland.

The *Iliad* (11.632–637) describes the drinking cup of Nestor. It was large with rich decoration in gold, with four handles. It required a strong man to lift it from the table when it was filled with wine. The cup of the Homeric Nestor had become so famous through the poetry that there was a temple in Capua, where credulous tourists were shown a cup which allegedly was the one described by Homer (Ath. XI. 489c). If the author of this graffito was in fact alluding to the cup in the *Iliad*, then he must have known one of the narratives upon which epic poetry drew—or according to more radical interpretations, he had knowledge of early epic poetry, perhaps even of the *Iliad*. For this reason this graffito is of great importance to students of Greek literature. Its value would have been very limited, if exactly the same text was found written on a cup in Athens three centuries later. What gives this text meaning is the context.

But the context is not only the place (Ischia) and the time (late eighth century BCE), but also the bearer of the graffito: the cup (see in general Volioti, this volume). Whoever reads the text in a printed edition without looking at an image of the cup will not fully comprehend it. For the wonderfully decorated cup in the *Iliad* has little to do with this Rhodian cup, with its very simple decoration. It is exactly this contrast that justifies the assumption that this graffito was a joke in the context of a drinking party (Danek 1994/1995; Murray 1994; Lombardi 2003). It seems to be instantaneous poetry, one of the joyful voices of half-drunk men, surrounded by half-dressed girls, exchanging jokes over a half-emptied cup of wine. Whoever drinks from the cup will be seized by sexual desire, but a desire that cannot be satisfied, desire for the goddess of love—if we take Aphrodite literally, and not as a metonym for sex (e.g. Lapini 1991: 18–19). Then the joke was based on contrasts: between the cheap cup of clay and the valuable cup of the *Iliad*; between the sexual desire that the cup promises, and the fact that the desire will not be satisfied; between the proverbial wisdom of the epic Nestor and the loss of self-control through drinking and sexual desire (Faraone 1996). Composed on a particular occasion, inscribed with care somewhat later in such a manner that the lines of the inscription somewhat mirror the simple lines of the decoration (Osborne and Pappas 2007: 134), the text was read again and again, every time the cup was used, bringing to mind the joyful context of its composition.

This graffito is still not completely understood. In the countless studies dedicated to the text, the exact finding place is rarely mentioned. Luckily, the cup was not found in the Swiss antiquities market, but in a secure archaeological context. It was placed in the grave of a 10 to 14 year old boy. At some point this cup was removed from its usual context of the symposium—a social gathering dominated by rituals—and was used in an entirely different ritual context: in a funeral dominated by emotions. We should now forget the joyful mood of the symposium. We should imagine how a father, who has just observed the cremation of the dead body of his young son and has experienced the greatest loss a father can experience, is placing this cup into the grave (see further Volioti, pages 142, 146). Perhaps he was not a father but an adult man, who has lost a youthful companion, the master who had lost a favourite boy slave or the older lover of an ephebe (cf. Pavese 1996). What is certain is that this individual did not choose this cup because it was no longer useful in a symposium, but because it had captured the joy of the symposium and kept that memory. The boy, whom death had snatched away before he had the chance to experience the joys this cup promised, was given the cup as a compensation for a lost future; or perhaps a boy, who had offered joy during the drinking parties, was given a commemoration of these joyful moments. These scenarios are pure speculations, but they show that it is only through the combination of text, material and archaeological context that we can somehow approach this graffito as evidence for emotionality and intertextuality, ritual and memory, performance and male sexuality.

The background of graffiti admittedly is difficult to reconstruct. Even when we can determine the spatial context of graffiti and date them, their communicative and emotional contexts remain elusive (cf. Langner 2001: 21–6, 79–80). Were the makers of graffiti being watched (and knew it)? Were they making graffiti secretly in the night, as the courtesans in Lucian did, or for an audience, which watched and responded? Did this audience consist of peers, friends, competitors or superiors? What were their states of mind and emotional state? Were they drunk or sober? Were they making friendly jokes or contemptuous remarks? If some of these questions can sometimes tentatively be answered, the conversational or performative contexts, which involve orality and body language, can never be reconstructed.

Some of these difficulties can be overcome when we study larger groups of texts and images in their contexts. The case studies briefly presented in this chapter will treat such groups: graffiti that concern the architecture and topography of Aphrodisias, emotions, and competition. Although graffiti are notoriously hard to date (Langner 2001: 15), indirect evidence (location, letter-forms, content), which I cannot discuss in detail here, suggests that, unless otherwise stated, most of the material discussed here dates to Late Antiquity (c. fourth and fifth centuries CE).

GRAFFITI AND THE CITY

One of Aphrodisias' most impressive buildings is the *bouleuterion* (the townhall), constructed in the second half of the second century CE (Bier 2008). With some effort and under favourable light conditions one may recognize the word PROBATA written in Greek letters with red paint on 12 blocks, all of them of marble, of similar dimensions and along a frieze on the outer wall.⁵ In three cases the word appears up-side-down, which means that it had been written before the blocks were placed on the wall. It is not the Greek *próbata* (sheep), but either the name of man (a constructor?) in the genitive (*Probatā*) or the Latin *probata* ('checked and approved for use'), written on the blocks from a demolished building to be reused in the construction of the town hall. This kind of recycling of architectural material, very common in Aphrodisias, was subject to scrutiny by the authorities (Chaniotis 2008a: 68–9). Since the personal name Probatas is unattested in this period, I am inclined to favour the second explanation. If this is correct, the Latin word found its way to Aphrodisias probably because of its use in the Roman army and the Roman administration (for example, in the control of coins). Latin words adopted in Greek abound at Aphrodisias.⁶ These dipinti, therefore, provide information for the building work at the bouleuterion and possibly for the channels through which Latin words were adopted in the East. According to my definition, these texts differ from the graffiti, not only because they were painted and not inscribed but also because they fulfilled a semi-official function directly connected with the stones on which they were written. This is not the case with my next examples, which all have something in common: they show how graffiti contribute to our understanding of Aphrodisias' urban topography and the socio-economic organisation of space.

On a cistern located in the so-called Hadrianic Baths one notices the representation of a vase and next to it the name *Patrikiou* (Figure 10.3). We cannot determine whether image and text were made by the same person; it is quite possible that the name was inscribed decades after the image. Nevertheless, since this personal name is only attested in Late Antiquity (Chaniotis 2002: 235), it gives us an approximate date. It is the image that interests me in this context. The individual who made it, indeed quite skilfully, has preserved something he saw in this cistern and has been lost for ever: a fountain, in the manner it is often represented in mosaics.

The Aphrodisians were fond of graffiti representing the buildings that surrounded them or the buildings that they were constructing.⁷ The centre of the South Agora is occupied by a large pool (Ratté 2002: 22–3; fig. 1). A graffito on a plaque on its west side seems to be a drawing of exactly this pool. On the outer face of the south city wall, built shortly after the mid-fourth century CE someone—a worker, an architect, a proud citizen?



Figure 10.3 Drawing of a fountain and the name Patrikios (Hadrianic baths, east side of the wall which surrounds the pool). Drawing by author.

—drew quite accurately the outline of this very wall (De Staebler 2008: 311, fig. 34). A few blocks further east another individual engraved the acclamation ‘upright!’ (*orthon*), expressing his wish that this city wall would stand for a long time (Figure 10.5d). Such acclamations, expressions of local pride and hope, must have been heard when the work was completed. Another drawing of a pedimental building on the stylobate of the temple of Aphrodite may refer to exactly this building, or to the Christian church to which it was converted in the late fifth century CE (Figure 10.5c).



Figure 10.4 Drawing of a line measuring exactly one foot with a christogram above it (temple-church, south face of the south wall, on a block east of the doorway). Photo by author.

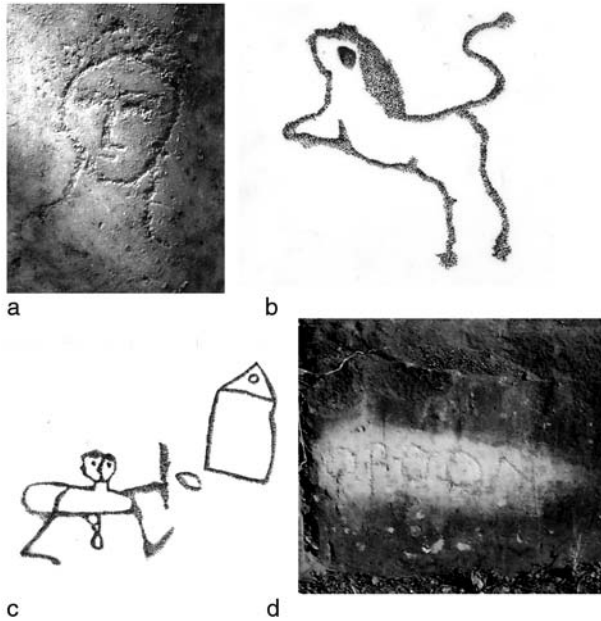


Figure 10.5 a) Face of a man engraved on a column of the Late Antique House (north of the Sebasteion). Photo by author;
 b) Running lion (from South Agora, north portico, 5th column from west). Drawing by Nicholas Quiring;
 c) Graffito of a man with phallus (an entertainer?) and a pedimental building (south stylobate of the temple of Aphrodite). Drawing by Nicholas Quiring;
 d) Graffito on a block of the Late Antique city (south stretch). Photo by author.

A large group of textual graffiti related to the organisation of space consists of place inscriptions and seat reservations (e.g. Roueché 1989: nos. 180-1, 187-212, 218; 1993: nos. 8, 12, 45-7). If we know that the bouleuterion was used in Late Antiquity for performances and entertainment it is thanks to graffiti related to performances and seat reservations, *inter alia* for Jews, young men, and the factions of the hippodrome (Roueché 1993: 179-89 and nos. 12 and 47; Bier 2008: 163-6; Reynolds 2008: 173-7). That some of these graffiti have been erased reminds us that graffiti should be seen in the context of competition and conflict. From Jewish symbols engraved on the columns of the south and north porticos of the Sebasteion we may infer that in Late Antiquity the *tabernae* were used by Jewish traders (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 133-4, nos. 5-6; Chaniotis 2002: 236-7, nos. 6-16). Personal names and professional designations explain who exercised his trade in the shady space provided between the columns in other public areas (Roueché 1989: nos. 180, 187-212). For instance in the portico opposite a bath complex near the theatre (Tetrastoon), two barbers, Alexandros (Roueché 1989: 233, no. 191) and Zenon (unpublished), had established their shops. Their names are scratched on the bluish marble,

hardly visible today. On a wall south of the temple of Aphrodite, one reads the prayer of the Christian musician Asterios and next to it engraved lines, occasionally with crosses (Roueché 1989: 172, no. 113). A measurement reveals their function: their length corresponds to exactly one foot, in a few cases to two feet (Figure 10.4). A similar line is visible on a wall on the southeast corner of the South Agora. These lines are units of measurement, used for instance for the measurement of textiles. On a column of the South Agora the text *Sophistou* ('the place of the sophist'; unpublished) shows that in Late Antiquity a teacher was expecting his clients here.

Another possible function of the rooms in the porticos of the South Agora is revealed by pictorial and textual graffiti: they may have served as club houses of the factions of the hippodrome (Chaniotis and De Staebler forthcoming). The texts are acclamations for the city and for the factions of the Reds, the Greens, the Blues (Roueché 1993: 227–8, no. 186): 'The fortune of the Greens wins' (*nikai hē tychē tōn Prasinōn*); 'the fortune of the Blues wins' (*nikai hē tychē tōn Benetōn*); 'the fortune of the Reds wins' (*nikai [hē tychē] tō'Rousōn*; unpublished). The images show animals, which were presented in *venationes* in the city's stadion: lions (Figure 10.5b), identifiable as such on account of their shaggy manes and the waving tufted tails, a wild dog attacking a stag or deer, an ostrich. Such images and texts make sense if we assume that gatherings of the factions occasionally took place in this area, either during festivals or because of the existence of club-houses. These acclamations bring me to my last subject: the feeling of competition as reflected by graffiti.

EMOTION AND COMPETITION

'The fortune of the city triumphs!' is written on a seat of the theatre. This text records what was shouted in the theatre, perhaps during a celebration (Roueché 1993: 30, no. 3; cf. *ibid.* 37–8 nos. 8–10). While such an acclamation was meant to express unity in a positive way, others placed more emphasis on opposition: 'bad years for the Greens!'; 'the fortune of the Blues wins!'; 'the fortune of the Greens wins!' (Roueché 1993: 101, nos. 46.B.1, 46.C.18, E.9, E.11, G.12, J.13, X.4). Another acclamation in the theatre originates in the Pytheanitai, apparently the followers of Pytheas, a prominent pagan statesman (Roueché 1993: 96–7: [*nikai hē ty]chē tōn Pytheanitōn*; 'the fortune of the Pytheanitai wins!'). Near the theatre, in the South Agora, the members of the association of litter-bearers cried out on another occasion, possibly during a festival: 'the fortune of the litter-bearers wins!' (Roueché 1989: 121–2, no. 80). The columns of this spacious agora still echo the voices of an assembled crowd during the inauguration of the restored west portico, around 480 CE, because these voices were recorded on stone, probably shortly after the ceremony (Roueché 1989: 125–36, nos. 83–4). Carefully engraved, probably with public

authorisation, these texts are not graffiti, but they are instructive as regards the context of acclamations. They praise the Christian benefactor Albinus, the sponsor of the construction: 'you did not care about money, and you have earned fame'; 'look around and see what you have donated', are two of these acclamations. Others demonstrate the acceptance of authority, by wishing long life to the emperors, the governors and the senate. And yet, allusions to conflicts disturb this surface of harmony and unanimity. One of the texts alludes to envious opponents: 'envy shall not prevail over fortune'. Another acclamation is blunt: 'the entire city cries out: Your enemies should be thrown in the river. The Great God may grant this!'. Another acclamation, decorated with a cross, makes clear who this god was: 'there is a single god in all the world' (*eis ton kosmon holon heis ho theos*).

The aforementioned graffiti are not ambiguous. They express feelings of group identity, pride and opposition in the context of competition: competition between cities, professions, political groups, circus factions, religions, the elite and the masses. This competitive, often aggressive, character is in the nature of acclamations, both secular and religious (Roueché 1984; Chaniotis 2009). Graffiti containing acclamations can more often be placed in historical contexts. This is the case also with graffiti related to religious conflicts. In Aphrodisias, such graffiti belong to a very particular historical context: the competition among religions in Late Antiquity, from the opening of a 'market of religions', when the prosecution of the Christians stopped, to the final victory of Christianity. Christian, Jews and a strong group of philosophically educated followers of an enlightened form of polytheism competed in Aphrodisias for the support of those who were asking the same questions. Is there a god? How can we attain a better afterlife? Before the intolerance of imperial legislation decided this competition in favour of Christianity, a long period of interaction, dialogue, mutual influence, but also of violent conflict, dominated life in Aphrodisias, and the graffiti reflect this religious atmosphere (Chaniotis 2002; 2008b): crosses, prayers and acclamations engraved by the Christians; menoroth and other symbols engraved by the Jews; double axes (*labrys*), the symbol of the Karian Zeus, engraved by the followers of the old religion.

Graffiti on the heads of portrait statues of governors give us an impression of the aggressive atmosphere in Late Antiquity. It can be suspected that some of the later governors were pagans or sympathisers of the old religion because of their education and philosophical training. A statue of one of them, Oecumenius (late fourth century?), was destroyed on purpose. When the various parts of this statue were put together, Bert Smith made an interesting discovery (Smith 2002): a graffito written on the back of Oecumenius' head, almost certainly by the sculptor or one of his assistants, and consisting of the letters *chi mu gamma*, a common Christian abbreviation (*Christon Maria gennai*). Presumably a Christian sculptor demonstrated in this way, without putting himself into danger, his protest against the pagan governor or the person who had commissioned the statue. A

similar graffito is found on the head of another governor in Aphrodisias (Smith 2002; Chaniotis 2008b, 253–4). Such graffiti reveal the importance of religious identities for the inhabitants of Aphrodisias and reflect the bitter competition among Jews, Christians and pagans.

‘Kar[m]idianos is queer’ (*Kar[m]idianos pathēkos*) was written in Late Antiquity on the plaster wall of a backstage corridor of the *bouleuterion* (Roueché 1989: 245, no. 218). Seen in isolation, this text seems as straightforward as the aforementioned acclamations. It seems to say something about the sexual preferences of a Karmidianos. This text belongs, however, to a relatively large group of graffiti with sexual vocabulary and obscene images (Figure 10.6), well represented in Aphrodisias and elsewhere.⁸ Such texts are quite common among the pottery graffiti from the Athenian agora (late sixth/early fifth century BCE): e.g. ‘Titas, the Olympian victor, is a lewd fellow’ (Lang 1976: C5: *Titas Olympion[i]kos katapygōn*); ‘Sydromachos, whose arse is as big as a cistern, suffered this’ (Lang 1976: C23: *Etlē lakkopr[ō]ktos ho Sydromachos*). The use of obscene language as insult allows us to understand the function of such graffiti. Their authors wanted to humiliate and insult their opponents. By ascribing them the passive part in sexual intercourse, they indicated that they were inferior and defeated. On a Hellenistic sling bullet from Cyprus one reads: *kye* (‘get this and get pregnant’). Success in battle, i.e. the hitting of the opponent with the bullet,



Figure 10.6 Obscene pictorial graffiti, consisting of phalluses and faces (block built in the east wall). Photo by author.

was assimilated to sexual intercourse (Chaniotis 2005: 102). We are not dealing with sexuality, but with competition and power, with notions of superiority and domination.

Similar ambiguities can be seen in another group of graffiti, which at first sight express feelings of affection between men. 'Theodatos loves Hypsikles' is engraved on the stage wall of the theatre (*philei Theodatos Hypsiklea*; slightly modified reading of Roueché 1993: 35–6, no. 7b). 'I love Epikrates' is written on a column of the north portico of the Sebasteion, 'I love Apollonios, the master' (*philō Apollōnion kyrion*) on another one, 'I love' on a third one (all unpublished). 'I love' (*philō*) appears also on columns of the west portico of the Agora and the Tetrastoon (unpublished). How is the word *philō* to be understood here? Is this expression of love or of friendship? Did Epikrates see who wrote the graffito—in other words is there an element of performance in the writing of the graffito in a public space filled with people? Is this expression of genuine feelings or of flattery? Why did Theodatos reveal his identity in his graffito? Or was it perhaps written by a third person, who was commenting on the relationship of affection between Theodatos and Hypsikles? Was this friendship based on reciprocity and equality? Is the author of the text 'I love Apollonios, the master' a frustrated homosexual slave or a flatterer? Such graffiti remain enigmatic, because their background is elusive. There are some indications that we are dealing, again, with evidence for hierarchical relations rather than affection. In Aphrodisias Hypsikles was a name exclusively used by leading members of the elite (high priests, *stephanephoroi*, a secretary of the assembly).⁹ This suggests that Theodatos may not have been a personal friend of a man, but the follower of a statesman, such as the Pytheanitai (see page 202 above). In his graffito Theodatos may have expressed the acceptance of a hierarchical relationship, analogous to that of the graffito 'I love Apollonios, the master', and not reciprocal friendship.

Such declarations of affection were public performances, texts meant to be read, possibly to be read aloud. They presuppose competition. The slave who declares his love to his master presupposes the slave who hates another master. The showy declaration of friendship presupposes the possibility of enmity.

CONCLUSIONS

The selected examples which I have presented here have hopefully shown the potential and the problems involved in the study of graffiti in ancient urban settings. Ancient history as history of social hierarchies and tensions, of emotions, of the senses, of everyday life and of mentality approaches fundamental aspects of human behaviour. Some of the graffiti engraved on stone originate in the undying wish to defeat death and oblivion. We may be uncertain whether *Zēnōn egraphē*, a graffito on a column of the theatre

stage, should be translated as ‘Zenon wrote this’ (Roueché 1993: 34, no. 6.9) or ‘Zenon used to paint here’. This does not change the fact that his commemoration of himself has come to us—Zenon has left to us more words than Kleisthenes. The acclamations for the benefactor Albinus reveal the ambiguous feelings of a community, which depends on the generosity of the benefactor, and for this reason it expresses gratitude in order to motivate others to follow his example, but at the same time it envies him. With the numerous graffiti related to gladiatorial events (also Langner 2001: nos. 855, 858, 908, 912; Chaniotis and De Staebler forthcoming) we enter the darkest area of human emotions: the joy that men feel when watching the spectacle of dying men—unknown, anonymous men. The graffiti that are related to religious conflicts address a familiar issue, how religion may divide a community.

In order to understand all this, we need contexts. Literary sources often provide them, for instance for the use of graffiti in political conflicts in Rome.¹⁰ In the case of Aphrodisias, numerous literary sources concerning the religious conflicts in Late Antiquity illuminate the background for a large number of textual and pictorial graffiti (Chaniotis 2008b); another large group, whose background is somewhat known, consists of graffiti related to entertainment, spectacles, traders and professional associations. The full meaning of other graffiti, especially those with emotional overtones, irony and wit, may escape us. The contexts of graffiti are not only historical and spatial, but also performative, involving a relationship between maker and audience, ceremonial, when recording oral performances (acclamations) during celebrations, and emotional.

Martial (12.61.7–10), in a well-known reference to graffiti, shows contempt towards them:

If you are eager to be read of, then look for some drunk poet of the dark archway, who writes poems with rough charcoal or crumbling chalk, which people read while they take a shit.

With rather few exceptions, modern historians of antiquity seem to have adopted a similar attitude and to have followed the advice of Plutarch not to bother with them (*Mor.* 520 d–e): ‘Nothing useful or pleasant is written on the walls; simply that so-and-so commemorates so-and-so wishing him well or that another one is the best of friends’. This has changed in recent years and this volume demonstrates the possibilities of graffiti to contribute to a wide variety of important debates. Exactly because of their non-monumental, private and often spontaneous nature, graffiti sometimes reflect in a more direct way than other categories of inscription the thoughts and feelings of people, about whom the literary sources are often silent. The potential of graffiti as evidence for historians and archaeologists, epigraphers and philologists is massive. Their study is difficult and challenging, but rewarding and never, ever boring.

NOTES

1. On the history and urban development of Aphrodisias see Reynolds 1982; Roueché 1989; Ratté 2001, 2002 and 2008; Chaniotis, forthcoming (a).
2. For earlier publications of graffiti from Aphrodisias see Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 132–6 nos. 1–2, 4–8; Roueché 1989: nos. 59, 80, 113–45, 179–213, 217–19; 1993: nos. 3, 6–12, 45–7; Langner 2001: nos. 134, 165, 193, 323–6, 336, 376–7, 404, 428, 430, 460, 564–5, 579–89, 632, 648–9, 676–9, 684, 717–18, 753, 761, 855, 858, 908, 912, 916, 980, 1094, 1106, 1144, 1154, 1211, 1238, 1291, 1312–13, 1373, 1613, 1635, 1705, 1712–13, 1737, 1774, 1808–9, 1818, 2307–9, 2348–50, 2364–9, 2424, 2438, 2443, 2458, 2470, 2498; Chaniotis 2002: 236–8 nos. 1–3 and 5–22; Roueché 2002; Smith 2002; Roueché 2007; Chaniotis 2008b: 259; 2008c; Chaniotis and de Staebler, forthcoming. My work in the collection of graffiti in Aphrodisias has been greatly supported by the members of the excavation team, especially by Michelle Berenfeld, Peter de Staebler, Joannis Mylonopoulos and Bahadır Yildirim.
3. For representation of busts and portraits in graffiti see Langner 2001: 34–43. For some new material from Athens see Hoff 2006.
4. CEG I 454; Arena 1994: no. 2; Dubois 1995: 22–8, no. 2. Reading and interpretation are extremely controversial, and the speculative scenario that I present here serves only one purpose: to show the significance of context. For bibliography and summary of the main interpretations see SEG 26.1144; 27.679; 29.975; 37.789; 39.1058; 40.850; 41.866; 42.919; 45.1454; 46.1327; 47.1488; 48.1278; cf. Buchner and Ridgway 1993: 751–9. I have profited a lot from Danek 1994/1995 and Lombardi 2003.
5. Chaniotis 2008a: 69 with n. 53 (with photo). Reynolds 2008: 175 no. 6, only publishes five of the 12 dipinti and tentatively reads *Probatou*. My photo clearly shows that the last letter is A and that the text should be read as PROBATA.
6. See Reinach 1906: 103–5, no. 17: *phoundē* = *funda*, *kampistron* = *capistrum*; Roueché 1989: no. 218: *pathēkos* = *pathicus*; Roueché 1993: no. 45.2.U: *phroumentarios* = *frumentarius*; Roueché 1993, no. 45.39.P: *aurarios* = *aurarius*.
7. For the representation of buildings in graffiti see Langner 2001: 71–2; for a new example from Amathous see Aupert and Hermay 2006: 97, fig. 11.
8. To the two texts published by C. Roueché (1993: 100 no. 46.A.6; 113 no. 46.K.9; cf. Bain 1997), I can add an unfinished form of the verb *pygizō* on the 18th column (from east) of the north portico of the South Agora and the verb *binein* (written *binin*) on the plastered wall of the backstage corridor of the bouleuterion. For obscene pictorial graffiti, generally, see Langner 2001: 39–40 and 61–2, and in Attica, see Taylor, this volume.
9. MAMA 8.408a, 440, 507, 516, 568; SEG 54.1059, 1061; CIG 2822–2823.
10. See for example App. B Civ. 2.16.112; Suet. Ner. 39.2; 45.2; Dom. 13.2; Cass. Dio 62.16.2ab (see Zadorojnyi this volume).

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